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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

ANNUAL REPORT

ADDENDUM COVERING THE SECOND PHASE
OF THE FIFTY-NINTH SESSION
(1-4 September 2003)

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
OFFICIAL RECORDS, 2003

SUPPLEMENT No. 19

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NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACPR	Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission
ADB	Asian Development Bank
APCAEM	Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery
APCTT	Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CCOP	Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia
CGPRT Centre	Regional Coordination Centre for Research and Development of Coarse Grains, Pulses, Roots and Tuber Crops in the Humid Tropics of Asia and the Pacific
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
EPOC	ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre
FDI	foreign direct investment
GDP	gross domestic product
HIV/AIDS	human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ICT	information and communication technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	information technology
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SIAP	Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
TRIPS	trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Introduction

1. It will be recalled that, owing to the SARS epidemic, the fifty-ninth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific was divided into two phases. The first phase was held on 24 and 25 April 2003. The report on the first phase is contained in document E/2003/39 (E/ESCAP/1298). The second phase of the fifty-ninth session was held from 1 to 4 September 2003. The report on the second phase was adopted unanimously by the Commission at its final plenary meeting on 4 September 2003. The present report is issued as an addendum to the report on the first phase.

Chapter I

RESOLUTIONS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

59/1. Regional action in follow-up to the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS

59/2. Strengthening social safety in the Asian and Pacific region

59/3. Regional implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific during the Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012

59/4. Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010

Chapter II

FIFTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION (PHASE II)

A. Attendance and organization of work

2. The second phase of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission was held at the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok, from 1 to 4 September 2003. The session comprised the plenary, two Committees of the Whole and one Working Group on Draft Resolutions, which met in parallel.

3. The session was attended by representatives of the following members and associate members:

Australia	Nepal
Azerbaijan	Netherlands
Bangladesh	New Zealand
Bhutan	Pakistan
Brunei Darussalam	Palau
Cambodia	Papua New Guinea
China	Philippines
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Republic of Korea
Fiji	Russian Federation
France	Samoa
India	Singapore
Indonesia	Solomon Islands
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Sri Lanka
Japan	Thailand
Kazakhstan	Tonga
Kiribati	Turkey
Lao People's Democratic Republic	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Malaysia	United States of America
Maldives	Uzbekistan
Micronesia (Federated States of)	Vanuatu
Mongolia	Viet Nam
Myanmar	French Polynesia
	Hong Kong, China
	Macao, China
	Niue

4. By virtue of rule 3 of the Commission's rules of procedure, representatives of Argentina, Austria, Botswana, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Romania, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain and Switzerland attended. Representatives of the Holy See also attended.

5. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies attended: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Fund for Women, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and United Nations Population Fund. Officials from the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the Regional Commissions New York Office also attended.

6. Representatives of the following specialized agencies were present in a consultative capacity: International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, International Civil Aviation Organization, World Health Organization, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Universal Postal Union, International Telecommunication Union, World Meteorological Organization and United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

7. The following intergovernmental organizations attended as observers: Asian and Pacific Coconut Community, Asian and Pacific Development Centre, Asian Clearing Union, Asian Development Bank, Asian-Pacific Postal Union, Asian Productivity Organization, Asian Reinsurance Corporation, Asia-Pacific Telecommunity, Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific, Colombo Plan Secretariat, Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia, European Commission, International Organization for Migration, Mekong River Commission, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme and Typhoon Committee Secretariat.

8. Observers were present from the following non-governmental organizations in general consultative status: Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, International Council on Social Welfare, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation on Ageing, International Movement ATD Fourth World, International Planned Parenthood Federation, Muslim World League, World Federation of Trade Unions, World Muslim Congress, World Veterans Federation and Zonta International; and from the following organizations in special consultative status: Baha'i International Community, Disabled Peoples' International, International Air Transport Association, Population Council and World Association for Small and Medium Enterprises; and from the following organization on the roster: International Union of Railways.

9. Representatives of the ASEAN Port Authorities Associations, Asian Institute for Rural Development, Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Japan International Cooperation Agency and Pakistan Christian Peace Foundation also attended the session.

10. The list of participants is given in document ESCAP(LIX)/INF.1/Add.1/Rev.1.

11. In accordance with rule 13 of its rules of procedure, the Commission elected the Hon. Tan Sri Bernard Giluk Dompok (Malaysia) Chairperson of the second phase of the fifty-ninth session.

12. Following its past practice, the Commission decided to elect the following heads of delegations Vice-Chairpersons: H.E. Mr. Shamsaddin Khanbabayev (Azerbaijan), H.E. Mr. Ou Orhat (Cambodia), H.E. Mr. Shen Guofang (China), Hon. Solomoni Naivalu (Fiji), H.E. Mr. S.B. Mookherjee (India), H.E. Mr. Achmad Sujudi (Indonesia), H.E. Mr. Mohammad Reza Vaezmahdavi (Islamic Republic of Iran), H.E. Mr. Eisuke Hinode (Japan), H.E. Mr. Phongsavath Boupha (Lao People's Democratic Republic), H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Hussain Zaki (Maldives), H.E. Ms. Natsag Udval (Mongolia), H.E. U Soe Tha (Myanmar), H.E. Mr. Shankar Prasad Sharma (Nepal), H.E. Mr. Waqar Masood Khan (Pakistan), H.E. Mr. Antonio S. Lopez (Philippines), H.E. Mr. Sajith Premadasa (Sri Lanka), H.E. Mr. Surakiart Sathirathai (Thailand), Hon. Raphael Worwor (Vanuatu) and H.E. Mr. Dao Viet Trung (Viet Nam).

13. Committee of the Whole I elected Ms. Noumea Simi (Samoa) Chairperson and Ms. Sumaira K. Aslam (Pakistan) and Mr. Soodsakorn Putho (Thailand) Vice-Chairpersons. Committee of the Whole II elected Mr. Bayazid Mardookhi (Islamic Republic of Iran) and H.E. Ms. Adi Litia Samanunu Qalirea Talakuli Cakobau (Fiji) and Mr. Joseph Yun (United States) Vice-Chairpersons.

14. The Commission also constituted a Working Group on Draft Resolutions, under the chairmanship of Mr. Ashok Sajjanhar (India), to consider draft resolutions presented during the session. Ms. Maria Lourdes V. Ramiro Lopez (Philippines) and Mr. Mikhail E. Savostiyanov (Russian Federation) were elected Vice-Chairpersons of the Working Group.

B. Agenda

15. The Commission adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session:
   - (a) Opening addresses;
   - (b) Election of officers;
   - (c) Adoption of the agenda.
2. Policy issues for the ESCAP region:
   - (a) Implications of recent economic and social developments;
   - (b) Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region.
3. Management issues:
   - (a) Implementation of Commission resolution 58/1 on restructuring the conference structure of the Commission;
   - (b) Activities of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission;
   - (c) Outcome of the evaluation of the regional institutions and the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre.
4. Theme topic for the sixtieth session of the Commission.
5. Emerging issues and developments at the regional level:
   - (a) Poverty reduction;
   - (b) Managing globalization;
   - (c) Emerging social issues.
6. Least developed, landlocked and island developing countries.
7. Reports of regional intergovernmental bodies.
8. Other matters.
9. Adoption of the report of the Commission.

C. Account of proceedings

16. The session was declared open by the Acting Chairperson of the fifty-eighth session, H.E. Mr. Shankar Prasad Sharma (Nepal). The Executive Secretary of ESCAP delivered an address, followed by a video message from the Secretary-General. H.E. Mr. Korn Dabbaransi, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, delivered the inaugural address.

17. H.E. Mr. Festus G. Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana, and Dr. Nafis Sadik, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia, attended and gave keynote addresses at the Ministerial Round Table focusing on HIV/AIDS on 2 September 2003.

Statement by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP

18. The Executive Secretary welcomed those attending the session. He expressed gratitude to the

Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand for inaugurating the session, thus reaffirming the country's commitment to the aims and ideals of the United Nations and the role of ESCAP in promoting sustainable economic development and social equity in the region.

19. He noted that the Economic and Social Council, at its substantive session in July 2003, had approved the admission of Timor-Leste as a full member of the Commission. With the inclusion of Timor-Leste, the Commission comprised 53 members and 9 associate members.

20. He expressed confidence that, with the strong support and close cooperation of all member States, the Commission would be able to tackle the numerous and daunting challenges ahead.

Message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations

21. In his message, the Secretary-General noted that in recent decades more people had escaped from poverty in Asia and the Pacific than in any other part of the world, and more than at any previous time. The ESCAP region had done more than any other region to make globalization work to its advantage.

22. Those gains had impressed the whole world; they must be cherished and carefully nurtured and, above all, should not be reversed by the growing threat of HIV/AIDS.

23. More than 8 million people in the region were now living with HIV/AIDS, and the number was rising fast. Some areas had been battling the epidemic for well over a decade, but it had now reached almost every corner of the region.

24. Left unchecked, AIDS would not only devastate millions of lives; it would also impose huge burdens on the region's health systems and soak up resources that were badly needed for social and economic development.

25. The fight against HIV/AIDS required constant vigilance and renewal. Experience elsewhere had shown that its spread could only be turned back when there was a coordinated response from all sectors of society and every branch of government. It required leadership at every level.

26. As representatives of the region's Governments, members of the Commission could make that happen. It was a vital responsibility.

27. One of the Millennium Development Goals, agreed by all the world's Governments, was to halt, and begin to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS throughout the world by the year 2015. Since it represented the world's largest region, in both area and population, the Commission had a decisive part to play in ensuring the attainment of that goal. There was no time to lose.

28. He commended ESCAP for choosing to focus on HIV/AIDS at the current session. It was a terrifying challenge, but, with energy and imagination, the disease could be beaten.

Inaugural address by the Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand

29. The Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand extended a warm welcome to all participants. Bangkok had been home to ESCAP for over 50 years, and he wished all participants a pleasant stay in Thailand.

30. On behalf of the Government of Thailand, he welcomed Timor-Leste as the fifty-third member of ESCAP and expressed confidence that its participation would help to strengthen the Commission in its role as the main economic and social development forum in the Asian and Pacific region.

31. Thailand was particularly proud to host ESCAP, which now served more than 3.5 billion people, representing over 60 per cent of the world's population. As the only intergovernmental forum covering the entire region, ESCAP had been a catalyst for long-term social and economic development for over five decades, with the last two decades showing substantial progress. In addition to a decrease in poverty, there had been improvements in other areas, such as health care, education, basic infrastructure and gender equality. Furthermore, in the preceding year most economies in the Asian and Pacific region had shown signs of surprising strength, despite the continued weakness of the world economy.

32. The current year could present a different story. Even though it was still unclear to what extent the war in Iraq and the spread of SARS might have affected growth, their ramifications for core industries of the region, especially tourism, were detrimental. The most obvious impact was that the Commission had had to meet in a second phase, rather than as originally scheduled in April. The impact of those two events might have been controlled in a relatively short period of time, but one lesson to be drawn was that if not dealt with in the most effective and expeditious manner, a deadly epidemic could be more dangerous to the world than the impact of war.

33. Against that backdrop, there was an urgent need for a quick response mechanism to deal with the outbreak of infectious diseases. Access to the right information was critical in times of crisis. People should not be left in limbo: the public needed to be informed of the latest developments while assuming that the appropriate measures were in place so that there would be no room for panic. That was exactly the approach which the Government of Thailand had taken in dealing with the recent SARS crisis. Giving the public access to the facts concerning the severity of the disease and the Government's actions to control it on a regular basis had proved to be a successful strategy for Thailand. Public confidence had also been created

through measures taken in concert with other countries. Thailand, for instance, had hosted the Special ASEAN-China Leaders Meeting on SARS in April 2003 and the APEC Health Ministers' Meeting on SARS in June 2003. Those meetings had given rise to a general consensus that there was need for a regional mechanism to prevent such outbreaks of disease or other crises in the future. Without access to the accurate information necessary for early warning and confidence-building among the public, such a mechanism could hardly work to the advantage of countries in the region.

34. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals had set a standard for human development in the world and served as a reiteration of the fact that economic and social aspects, ranging from poverty eradication to fighting HIV/AIDS to ensuring environmental sustainability, were two sides of the same coin. Both needed to be achieved in order to sustain the well-being of the world community. The priorities reflected in the Millennium Development Goals mirrored those of Thailand's own development strategy, which aimed to stimulate sustainable growth and social equality through empowerment of the people, building strength from the grass roots. In fact, Thailand was one country that proposed the new concept of "MDGs-Plus", using the Millennium Development Goals as a baseline of development rather than as an ultimate goal. Thailand was confident that it could achieve and even exceed the Goals by 2015.

35. ESCAP was playing an important role in strengthening the capacities of countries in the region to cope with the challenges of globalization. Those challenges needed to be addressed collectively with a view to accelerating the economic dimension of development while attending to the management of complex social issues. In that regard, the work of the ESCAP secretariat on the implementation of resolution 58/1 of 22 May 2002, aimed at restructuring the conference structure of the Commission to focus on the three thematic areas of poverty reduction, managing globalization and emerging social issues, was to be commended.

36. It was significant that the theme of the current session, "Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region", enabled participants to discuss those concerns and decide how to deal with them in the context of regional cooperation.

37. The issue of HIV/AIDS always stood out as a grave concern of modern times. The spread of HIV/AIDS was extremely alarming, with over 42 million people worldwide infected by the deadly virus, 90 per cent of whom lived in developing countries. HIV/AIDS and the recent outbreak of infectious diseases such as SARS were non-traditional threats that posed a severe challenge to human security and socio-economic development, affecting health care, industrial productivity and human resources. A holistic approach was needed to combat those threats.

38. Statistics showed that currently one in five new HIV infections throughout the world occurred in the Asian and Pacific region, which threatened to replace sub-Saharan Africa as the new centre of the global HIV/AIDS pandemic if corrective action was not taken. It was imperative to strive to control that common threat, which hindered the opportunities for economic and social development. Accordingly, Thailand remained committed to containing the spread of HIV/AIDS and eliminating the scourge of malaria and other major diseases that afflicted humanity, in line with the Millennium Development Goals. Thailand also stood ready to cooperate and share its experiences in combating HIV/AIDS with other countries. In that regard, Thailand would host the Fifteenth International AIDS Conference in July 2004, in the hope that regional and international cooperation in preventing and alleviating the HIV/AIDS pandemic would save millions of lives and prevent the economic and social gains of the region from being reversed.

39. On the economic front, one of the challenges facing developing countries of the ESCAP region, including Thailand, was to maintain the momentum of economic recovery while committing themselves to trade liberalization and enhanced productivity and competitiveness. In order to create a stronger foundation for economic stability and a more equitable distribution of income, Thailand had initiated a new policy aimed at extending resources to support SMEs and microbusinesses. Thailand was also committed to seizing the benefits of the digital economy and promoting a knowledge-based economy. Those were issues that were being pursued rigorously in various forums, including APEC and the Asia Cooperation Dialogue.

40. Since October 2002, Thailand had arranged APEC meetings in various parts of the country. The APEC Summit itself would be held at Bangkok in October 2003. The theme of that meeting, "A world of differences: partnership for the future", underscored the diversity of APEC member economies and the importance of building a strategic and mutually beneficial partnership from the existing diversity. One of the subthemes of the meeting was "Promoting human security", which clearly reflected Thailand's vision in attaching great importance to the incorporation of both economic and social concerns into its development strategy.

41. Another regional forum that was gaining momentum was the Asia Cooperation Dialogue, which had been inaugurated in June 2002 to serve as a forum for both cooperation and dialogue on common issues such as poverty alleviation, SMEs, e-commerce, energy security, tourism and financial cooperation, thus propelling the whole of Asia into a new dimension. Thailand had been honoured to host the Second Asia Cooperation Dialogue Ministerial Meeting at Chiang Mai in June 2003. One of the outstanding outcomes of that meeting had been the formal creation of the Asian Bond Fund and the Asian bond market, representing the

new architecture of the world of differences. The Asian Bond Fund was designed to enable surplus capital from one Asian country to create wealth in another and to contribute not only to ensuring the full recovery of the region's economies but also to promoting the adoption of best practices in Asia's capital market development. The Asian bond would also benefit regions outside Asia, serving, together with the United States and euro bond markets, to support a more balanced and stable world financial market.

42. On the domestic front, since the present Thai Government had assumed office more than two years previously, domestic needs and priorities had been carefully rearranged based primarily on domestic resources and strengths. Poverty and debt reduction had been placed at the top of the development agenda. Thailand's economic growth of 5.2 per cent in 2002, the highest since the economic crisis in 1997, demonstrated the Government's notable success in pursuing a dual-track economic policy. On the one hand, that policy underscored the important role of the private sector in trade and investment with emphasis on social responsibility. On the other hand, the grass-roots economy was being stimulated through a number of government-assisted programmes, such as the establishment of village funds, microcredit facilities, SME incentive schemes and the "one village, one product" scheme. Despite SARS, growth in 2003 was projected to be around 5.5-6 per cent, coupled with very sound fiscal and financial records. On 31 July, Thailand had announced its last repayment of loans to IMF, making the country free from all IMF obligations two years ahead of schedule.

43. Growth in GDP alone was inadequate to enhance the welfare of the people, especially in rural areas. Efforts were therefore directed towards improvement in the delivery of basic social needs such as health care, education, employment, credit, housing and social security, and towards greater participation by local communities in the development process. New opportunities needed to be created while enhancing the entrepreneurial spirit of people at the grass-roots level so that they would, in turn, become an enterprising element in the country's growth. Thailand was certain that its economy rested on a secure and stable foundation that would lead to a path of sustainable development. It was firmly convinced that the problem of poverty could be eradicated within six years.

44. There were many challenges lying ahead in the light of rapid globalization. The new ESCAP conference and programme structure provided a sound basis for strengthening the future role of ESCAP in the promotion of sustainable development, which was critical to achieving regional and universal prosperity and peace. ESCAP needed vision and policy guidelines from its members and associate members on how to steer its work in response to their needs. There was a need to cooperate in good faith and in a spirit of partnership to achieve the objectives of sustainable development.

45. On behalf of the Government of Thailand, the Deputy Prime Minister welcomed the offer by the Government of China to host the sixtieth session of the Commission at Shanghai in 2004.

Policy issues for the ESCAP region

Policy statement by the Executive Secretary

46. The Executive Secretary began by noting that the crisis caused by SARS had ended and he was gratified that its adverse impact on the economies of the region had been confined to the second quarter of 2003. Although developing countries of the ESCAP region had been able to exceed their collective 2001 growth by nearly 2 percentage points in 2002, maintaining that performance was subject to major caveats in the months ahead: first, there was the aftermath of the war in Iraq, which was manifesting itself in volatile energy markets; second, ongoing political tensions; and third, the ever-present danger of a major terrorist attack.

47. The Executive Secretary informed the Commission that ESCAP's work was concentrated on three key thematic areas: poverty reduction, managing globalization and addressing emerging social issues. Those themes provided a conceptual basis for the secretariat to integrate economic and social concerns in meeting the needs of the region. They also presented a framework for combining theoretical precepts with lessons drawn from real life.

48. Within the overall theme of poverty reduction, ESCAP had made an important contribution to supporting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the region. In addition to mainstreaming the relevant Goals in the programme of work of the secretariat, it had taken time-bound and results-based initiatives to support their achievement in the region; under those initiatives, the first regional report on the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific had been published in June 2003. ESCAP had also embarked on identifying and promoting good practices in poverty reduction, including the replication of the *Saemaul Undong* programme of the Republic of Korea in two least developed countries and the promotion of community-based safety nets through the Human Dignity Initiative in five countries.

49. The process of globalization had been more vibrant in Asia than elsewhere. However, its benefits had not been equally distributed in the region. In the mid-term review of the Doha work programme at the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference at Cancún, Mexico, developing countries rightly wished to see concrete evidence of development benefits accruing from the negotiations. In that regard, the recent revision by the Government of Japan of its generalized system of preferences scheme to substantially expand duty-free and quota-free access to the products of developing countries, and of the least developed countries in particular, was a welcome initiative. Similarly, recent

initiatives to expand the membership and coverage of products under regional trading arrangements, including those under the third round of negotiations of the Bangkok Agreement, should also continue to provide a mechanism for expanded trade flows in the region.

50. The World Summit on Sustainable Development had been held in 2002 and its Plan of Implementation had identified priority areas for action and imparted a sense of urgency in that regard. Special emphasis had been given to the role of regional commissions in implementation.

51. ESCAP had been actively involved in follow-up work on financing for development at the regional level. The *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003* had looked at the financing of education and health by the public sector in developing countries from the perspective of domestic resource mobilization. The secretariat was currently examining the overall resource implications of achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the context of the discussions on poverty reduction at the first session of the Committee on Poverty Reduction, to be held in October 2003.

52. The previous few years had demonstrated the enormous benefits of ICT. Nevertheless, for the benefits to be equally shared, there was an urgent need for concerted action by all stakeholders and for favourable national policy frameworks. One of ESCAP's contributions to that had been the establishment of the Information, Communication and Space Technology Division, whose primary mandate was to promote ICT in the region. ESCAP was also actively engaged in the regional preparatory process leading up to the World Summit on the Information Society.

53. For better integration of the landlocked countries in Asia into the globalizing economy, improvement of the regional transport infrastructure was an urgent necessity. ESCAP had undertaken studies and organized subregional seminars in Central Asia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia and Nepal to formulate a regional platform for transit transport cooperation.

54. The Executive Secretary affirmed that in a globalizing world economy ESCAP was fully engaged in addressing the special needs of the economies in Central Asia and the Pacific.

55. Within the theme of addressing emerging social issues, ESCAP was assisting its members in formulating and implementing policies following the rights-based approach. In that context, it had organized the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Conclude the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, at Otsu City, Shiga, Japan, in October 2002. The Meeting had adopted the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Rights-based and Barrier-free Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

56. The Executive Secretary referred briefly to the current year's theme study on "Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region". The principal finding of the study was that it was crucial to promote public health in the region. For its part, the secretariat would strengthen its efforts to assist national and local partners in tackling the spread of HIV/AIDS and other major infectious diseases. In addition, ESCAP would promote the objectives of the Plan of Action on Population and Poverty adopted at the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, held in December 2002, and implement the Beijing Platform for Action for the advancement of women.

57. In conclusion, the Executive Secretary noted that the process of ESCAP revitalization was continuing hand in hand with the overall reform of the United Nations. In that context, ESCAP had undertaken an evaluation of the regional institutes operating under its auspices, namely, APCTT, the CGPRT Centre and SIAP.

Implications of recent economic and social developments

58. The Commission had before it the document entitled "Report on the current economic situation in the region and related policy issues" (E/ESCAP/1266/Rev.1 and Corr.1) and the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003* (ST/ESCAP/2233). It appreciated the comprehensive nature and excellent quality of the documentation prepared by the secretariat.

59. The Commission noted that despite unfavourable conditions in 2002 the economic performance of developing countries in the ESCAP region had been healthy: they had been the fastest-growing economies in the world. In 2003, the region had had to face further difficulties such as the war in Iraq, the outbreak of SARS and new terrorist attacks. Those developments had adversely affected the economic outlook for the region, in particular tourism and investment. Nevertheless, the economic performance of the region had remained satisfactory in the first half of the year.

60. Given that background, Governments of the region were faced with significant policy challenges. In the short term, notwithstanding the positive impact of intraregional trade in 2002 and the first half of 2003, sustaining growth would depend on stimulating domestic demand. Governments would also have to pursue improved standards of public and private sector governance and greater transparency within their domestic spheres.

61. In the medium to long term, the problem of poverty was the major policy challenge facing the developing countries. In that regard, the Commission recognized that in order to attain the Millennium Development Goals and improve the well-being of the

people, national economic policies and social policies had to be effectively coordinated and integrated. Experience indicated that economic development and social development were intertwined. As such, social development objectives, such as the reduction of inequality and poverty, full employment, social protection and the provision of basic social services must receive due importance in the formulation of economic policies. The Commission suggested that the secretariat undertake research to evaluate the interaction between economic and social policies in order to reconcile policy agendas and examine more closely the mechanisms by which social expenditures acted as productive factors in the development process.

62. The Commission noted that in order to create a stronger foundation for economic stability and a more equitable distribution of income, a new policy aimed at expanding resources to support SMEs and microbusinesses was needed. Additional resources could be generated from increased FDI and ODA, debt relief initiatives and gains from trade.

63. While deliberating on the strong positive linkages between economic and social development, the Commission noted that a healthy and educated population, particularly women, improved economic performance. That, in turn, provided a platform for further improving standards of health and education. The Commission supported the findings and recommendations contained in the *Survey* on how to ensure adequate and efficient education and health services, considered to be key elements for poverty reduction. While the public sector remained a major provider of those services in developing countries of the region, greater involvement of the private sector and support from the developed countries were also needed, particularly for the least developed and landlocked developing countries, whose ability to provide social services was still constrained by their special problems.

64. The Commission noted with appreciation the financial contribution made by the Korea International Cooperation Agency to ESCAP's feasibility studies in three countries in the region to assess the potential of learning from the Republic of Korea's *Saemaul Undong* model to reduce poverty.

65. The Commission observed that natural disasters such as drought, floods and earthquakes were major factors affecting the spread of poverty in South and South-West Asia. There was a need for international cooperation mechanisms to combat the adverse impact of natural disasters. The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran recommended the establishment of an international specialized body within the United Nations to deal with the problems of natural disasters. It also informed the Commission that an international centre for coexistence with deserts, affiliated with Tehran University, was being established to conduct pilot projects in the country. It requested the secretariat to extend financial and technical assistance to the centre.

66. With regard to the environment-poverty nexus, the Commission noted that the poor tended to be the primary victims of global environmental damage. They relied heavily on fragile natural resources for their livelihoods and had fewer ways of responding to environmental problems. Against that background, the Commission recognized that reducing poverty might be an effective way of mitigating environmental damage, and vice versa. It was also suggested that addressing the problems of poverty and environmental degradation simultaneously might be both more cost-effective and more sustainable over the long term. In that regard, the Commission agreed on the need to provide assistance to countries in formulating strategic approaches to address poverty and environment issues effectively.

67. The Commission noted the steps taken by some countries in the region in meeting their commitments arising out of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, particularly in developing cross-sectoral programmes that would address the linkage between poverty and the environment. It also supported initiatives that could be useful in assessing the impact of poverty, particularly in ecologically threatened areas, and their implications for the marginalized people in those areas.

68. Reiterating the importance of sustainable development, the Commission confirmed that greater effort was needed in building environmental awareness, decentralizing responsibilities and improving coordination between agents, policy makers and institutions to improve the effectiveness of environmental policies.

69. With respect to the theme of globalization, the Commission noted that globalization brought both benefits and costs. The benefits needed to be shared more equitably and the costs minimized. Within globalization, trade based on an open, predictable, non-discriminatory, rules-based multilateral trading system was a fundamental component of the development strategies of the Commission's members and associate members. The Commission noted that the emergence of multiple regional and bilateral trading agreements had played an important role in the expansion of intraregional trade. That, together with the strengthened multilateral trading system, had made international trade the major engine of economic growth, replacing ODA.

70. In the context of globalization, the Commission noted that FDI inflows to developing countries were concentrated in a few countries. That trend had not only led to increasing disparities in income but had also widened the productivity gap among developing countries. The Commission noted further that policies and mechanisms needed to be devised to improve the distribution of FDI and maximize the benefits and development impact of the available FDI in those countries.

71. The Commission welcomed the Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health adopted at the

Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference at Doha, but urged greater use by developing countries of the compulsory licensing provisions in the Declaration. In that context, it welcomed the recent decision of the WTO General Council to improve developing country access to generic medicines, including antiretroviral drugs to combat HIV/AIDS, for public health reasons. The Commission expressed the hope that following that agreement, momentum could be gained in rapid and substantial reductions in agricultural subsidies, tariffs and non-tariff barriers to imports of goods and services from developing countries, simplification and relaxation of rules of origin and increased financial and technical assistance to developing countries for capacity-building in trade policy and related areas such as product development and technology and expansion and development of the agro-sector.

72. The Commission stressed the need for special attention to be given to the integration of least developed countries into the multilateral system on fair and equitable terms, including through a commitment on duty-free and quota-free access for all those countries' products and a guarantee of a substantial increase in the market share of unskilled and semi-skilled providers of goods and services in world trade.

73. The Commission welcomed the expected admission of Cambodia and Nepal to WTO at the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference. At the same time, it noted that the ESCAP region continued to account for the highest share of countries that were not yet members of WTO. It stressed the need to simplify and streamline accession procedures to enable developing countries to participate more effectively in the multilateral trading system.

74. In the context of emerging social problems, the Commission agreed that, while the problem of HIV/AIDS was not new, it was no longer simply a health problem but a serious threat to development, security and stability that directly affected people's well-being. The problem had therefore to be dealt with in a holistic manner. Since there was as yet no cure for the disease, prevention was the most effective way to deal with it. The Commission noted that poverty tended to exacerbate the rapid spread of the deadly AIDS virus. Hence, efforts to eradicate poverty would have a significant impact on reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS.

75. The Commission recognized the importance of information, communication and space technologies for socio-economic development, especially for bridging the digital divide, empowering disadvantaged social groups, improving education and private sector development and enhancing the efficiency and transparency of public services. It acknowledged the offer of the Russian Federation to share its expertise in the field of satellite communications, navigation and remote sensing for disaster management for the purpose of sustainable development. It also appreciated the support of France for ESCAP's regional cooperation programme in space technology applications for natural disaster management and sustainable development.

76. The Commission stressed the importance of the full implementation of the outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, held at Almaty in August 2003. It noted that the development of transport corridors between Asia and Europe and the project on the planning and implementation of demonstration runs of container block trains along the Trans-Asian Railway Northern Corridor provided promising areas for regional cooperation.

77. The Commission noted that negative shocks, in economics or health, did not remain confined to particular countries or regions. Hence, the only path towards sustained development was through collective action. Countries had to work together in close cooperation to overcome difficulties as they arose. As a United Nations intergovernmental organization, ESCAP provided an important venue for countries in the region to enhance exchanges and cooperation in various areas and inject new vigour into the economic and social development of the region.

Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region

78. The Commission appreciated the relevance of the theme topic "Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region". It noted the timeliness of the fifty-ninth session for collective regional deliberations on the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the Asian and Pacific region.

79. The Commission commended the secretariat for the high quality and attractive presentation of the theme study, as well as its detailed analysis of the HIV/AIDS situation in the Asian and Pacific region. It also welcomed the recommendations in the study on overcoming the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

80. The Commission recognized the severity of the threat to the region posed by the pandemic, and its potential for reversing the social and economic gains of the past several decades. Noting that no country was immune to the spread of HIV/AIDS, which was one of the most devastating pandemics that humanity faced, the Commission highlighted the possibility that, left unchecked, HIV/AIDS could endanger the lives of well over half a billion young people in the region.

81. Many delegations observed that the SARS pandemic during the first quarter of 2003 had highlighted the threat to development posed by HIV/AIDS and the need to strengthen the integration of economic and social concerns, with the support of political will and innovative measures, in addressing such diseases.

82. Many delegations emphasized that HIV/AIDS was not simply a health problem but rather a non-traditional threat to human security that hindered

poverty reduction and social and economic development. The Commission noted the importance of taking into consideration economic and social issues, such as globalization and poverty, in long-term actions to address the underlying causes of HIV/AIDS and mitigate its impact. In that regard, the Commission requested the secretariat to continue its efforts to ascertain the impact of HIV/AIDS and to address HIV/AIDS issues at a broader macro level, in order to improve the quality of life and well-being of all individuals.

83. The Commission endorsed the recommendations made in the theme study. Many delegations drew attention to the need for political commitment at the highest levels, reinforced by a multiministerial and multisectoral approach to halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, as the only way towards a comprehensive response to the pandemic. It was reported that several countries had established national committees on HIV/AIDS and had national plans or strategies to combat it.

84. The Commission underscored its support for all people living with HIV/AIDS, especially those living in poverty, to have greater access to affordable and high-quality antiretroviral drugs. In that regard, it welcomed the agreement recently reached by some WTO member countries, by which primacy was accorded to the need to ensure wide access to life-saving drugs over the patent rights of pharmaceutical companies. Some delegations referred to the accessibility and availability of essential life-saving medicines as a basic human right.

85. Several delegations informed the Commission of their national plans to manufacture generic antiretroviral drugs, to supply them at lower prices and improve their distribution to people living with HIV/AIDS. Some delegations also referred to the implementation of policies on the free distribution of antiretroviral drugs, as well as other relevant treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS.

86. The Commission called for a balance between prevention and treatment and care. It recognized the need for targeted prevention covering vulnerable groups, including children and youth, women, sex workers, injecting drug users, migrant workers and internally displaced people. It stressed the importance of working with civil society organizations to reach out to vulnerable groups.

87. The Commission underscored certain universal principles in HIV/AIDS intervention. Those included a multisectoral and integrated approach, confidentiality and privacy in voluntary counselling and testing, accessibility of affordable and quality care and medication, and the involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS in decision-making.

88. In highlighting stigma and discrimination as a major issue in the region, some delegations urged that more efforts be made to eliminate prejudices against, and uphold the human rights of, people living with HIV/AIDS.

89. The Commission cited international and regional cooperation, including South-South cooperation, as a central modality for combating the spread of HIV/AIDS. Such cooperation could take the form of sharing good practices as well as securing resources such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Countries of the region were encouraged to make the most of the Global Fund by actively applying for project funding.

90. The Commission underscored the role of ESCAP as the primary economic and social forum in the region for intercountry collaborative effort to tackle HIV/AIDS as an issue that respected no borders. Some delegations expressed the view that each country should develop its own measures against the spread of HIV/AIDS, while engaging in regional and interregional cooperation in experience-sharing and mutual learning.

91. Partnerships among government, the private sector and civil society were cited as an important component of an integrated approach to tackling HIV/AIDS, to improve the range of services and facilitate the pooling of resources. The Commission recognized the mobilization of social capital through community involvement as a key to effective interventions.

92. Donor countries reaffirmed their commitment to supporting global efforts to combat HIV/AIDS through bilateral, regional and multilateral arrangements, including the Global Fund. HIV/AIDS had been incorporated into the mid-term work plan (2003-2005) of the Human Security Network, in which, inter alia, member States were requested to factor in HIV/AIDS as a component of international assistance programmes.

93. The Commission drew attention to the need to pursue follow-up action on various international and regional mandates pertaining to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It emphasized the need for all countries to do their utmost to meet the Millennium Development Goals related to HIV/AIDS and poverty reduction. It was informed that HIV/AIDS had been incorporated into the 2001 ASEAN Summit Declaration on HIV/AIDS and the ASEAN five-year work plan on HIV/AIDS.

94. Some delegations pointed out that the greatest negative impact of pandemics such as HIV/AIDS and SARS was on least developed countries. Building national capability to provide adequate prevention against such diseases, as well as treatment and care for people infected and affected by them, was an important priority, particularly for those countries. The sustained support of the international community, particularly for poorer countries, was crucial.

95. The Commission acknowledged the importance of using ICT for informed policy- and decision-making on HIV/AIDS issues. It recommended

that ICT be fully exploited for a comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS. It proposed that ESCAP promote the availability, on an affordable basis for developing and least developed countries, of information on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and the treatment of people living with HIV/AIDS, as well as provide a platform for the adoption of related good practices in the Asian and Pacific region. It expressed appreciation of the offer of the Republic of Korea to share its experience in the use of ICT to combat HIV/AIDS.

96. The Commission adopted resolution 59/1 on regional action in follow-up to the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.

Management issues

Implementation of Commission resolution 58/1 on restructuring the conference structure of the Commission

97. The Commission had before it document E/ESCAP/1283 and Corr. 1, containing the report on the implementation of Commission resolution 58/1 of 22 May 2002 prepared in compliance with paragraphs 4 and 6 of the resolution. In that resolution, the Commission had requested the Executive Secretary to explore innovative ways to bring about greater ministerial participation and more active exchanges among representatives at sessions of the Commission and also to report to the Commission at subsequent sessions on the implementation of the resolution.

98. The Commission noted with appreciation the progress that the secretariat had made with the restructuring process and welcomed the Executive Secretary's continued efforts in revitalizing ESCAP. It expected that the new structure, endorsed at the fifty-eighth session, would help to improve the focus of the ESCAP programme of work, based on its comparative advantage in meeting the priority needs of the region. It requested the secretariat, in consultation with the members and associate members, inter alia, through ACPR, to further prioritize and sharpen that focus, discontinue obsolete activities and promote the sharing of best practices among countries and areas in Asia and the Pacific.

99. The Commission noted the secretariat's efforts to improve the format of Commission sessions. It expected that the implementation of the secretariat's proposals would bring about greater ministerial participation and more active exchanges among representatives. However, concerns were raised on some recommendations, which the Commission believed should be further considered by ACPR.

100. As to recommendation 1 in the report, the Commission noted that holding its sessions outside Bangkok would increase the visibility of the work of ESCAP. However, one delegation noted that the additional financial implications of such arrangements should be considered carefully, unless there was a strong commitment on the part of the host country agreeing to host the session.

101. With regard to recommendation 2 concerning activities during the Ministerial Segment, the Commission acknowledged that such activities should take into account the time constraints of ministers. The organization of too many activities could dilute the focus on important issues, such as the annual theme topic. Moreover, an increase in the number of informal meetings might weaken the role of the Commission. However, the Commission recognized the value of the informal Ministerial Round Table and felt that the practice should continue and be further developed.

102. Under recommendation 4, the view was expressed that organizing meetings of the three thematic committees in parallel, preceding the Senior Officials Segment, might limit the capacity of delegations to attend the three different committee sessions. It might also present difficulties for members and associate members in analysing the results of the committee deliberations. Further assessment of the proposal should await the commencement of work by the new committees.

103. The Commission noted the reservation against the possibility of reducing the number of meeting days during the Senior Officials Segment, since the Senior Officials were responsible not only for reviewing the reports of the subsidiary bodies, but also for considering the entire range of issues on the agenda of the Commission and preparing recommendations for adoption during the Ministerial Segment.

104. With regard to the organization of side events (recommendation 5), the Commission noted the concern about time limitations on the part of the ministers to participate in those events.

105. The Commission noted that any financial implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations should be absorbed under the available regular budget resources.

106. The Commission emphasized that the reform efforts by ESCAP should be regarded as a continuous endeavour requiring regular review. In that connection, it emphasized the importance of a mid-term review of the new ESCAP conference structure, to monitor its effectiveness and make adjustments, if required.

Activities of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission

107. The Commission had before it documents E/ESCAP/1288 and Add.1 and 2, containing the report of ACPR.

108. The report of ACPR was introduced by the representative of Australia, the ACPR Rapporteur.

During the period under review, May 2002 to August 2003, ACPR had held 12 regular sessions, 5 Informal Working Group meetings and 1 special session. One important development over the period had been the change in the structure of the Commission's thematic committees, with ACPR providing input for preparations and review of the final sessions of several committees under the previous committee structure, as well as considering preparations for the first sessions of the three new thematic committees: the Committee on Managing Globalization, the Committee on Poverty Reduction and the Committee on Emerging Social Issues.

109. In keeping with its terms of reference (annex II to resolution 58/1), ACPR had maintained close cooperation between the members and the secretariat of the Commission, and had advised and assisted the Executive Secretary on issues relevant to the work of ESCAP.

110. ACPR had been actively involved in reviewing the outcomes of recent sessions of the Commission, in particular the plan to implement resolutions adopted at the fifty-eighth session of the Commission and the major outcomes of the first phase of its fifty-ninth session. It had also worked with the secretariat in planning for the fifty-ninth session of the Commission and reviewing initial plans for its sixtieth session. ACPR had also reviewed and discussed, as appropriate, the preparations for and outcomes of many other recent important meetings organized by the secretariat, including the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Conclude the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, held at Otsu City, Shiga, Japan, in October 2002, the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, held at Bangkok in December 2002, and the sixth session of the Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries, held at Bangkok in September 2003. ACPR had also reviewed the Executive Secretary's recent initiative to evaluate the three ESCAP regional institutions and the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre, the secretariat's comprehensive evaluation of ESCAP publications and an outline of the secretariat's new technical cooperation strategy. At its special session in January 2003, ACPR had carried out an in-depth review of the secretariat's draft programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005, which had later been endorsed by the Commission during the first phase of its fifty-ninth session.

111. The Commission noted the important role of ACPR in providing a constructive channel of communication between members and the secretariat. In particular, it appreciated the Executive Secretary's practice of providing regular briefings to ACPR on issues such as his participation in outside meetings and on coordination with other organizations within and outside the United Nations system. It hoped that efforts would be continued to make ACPR's input into ESCAP activities more meaningful. The Commission believed that strengthening the role of ACPR would further increase the efficiency of the work of ESCAP.

112. The Commission requested that additional efforts be made to strengthen the guiding and monitoring role of ACPR in the review of various aspects of the ESCAP programme of work, including human and financial resource issues. It would be beneficial for ACPR to discuss significant programme activities during their implementation stage, in order to ensure effective implementation and successful programme delivery.

113. The Commission emphasized that issues related to the implementation of its resolutions and decisions, including resolution 58/1 of 22 May 2002 on restructuring the conference structure of the Commission, should be a focus of ACPR.

114. The Commission expressed its appreciation of recent efforts to distribute ACPR documents via the Internet and hoped that that development, which could save financial resources, would lead to further improvements in efficiency in the future.

Outcome of the evaluation of the regional institutions and the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre

115. The Commission had before it documents E/ESCAP/1299 on the outcome of the evaluation of the regional institutions, E/ESCAP/1300 on the outcome of the evaluation of the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre, E/ESCAP/1270, the report on the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, E/ESCAP/1272, the report of the Regional Coordination Centre for Research and Development of Coarse Grains, Pulses, Roots and Tuber Crops in the Humid Tropics of Asia and the Pacific, and E/ESCAP/1278, the report on the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology.

116. The Executive Secretary informed the Commission of his initiative to carry out, early in 2003, in-depth external evaluations of EPOC and the three ESCAP regional institutions (APCTT, SIAP and the CGPRT Centre).

117. With regard to EPOC, the Executive Secretary indicated that the objectives of the evaluation had been to review the relevance, performance and sustainability of its activities. With regard to the three regional institutions, the objectives of the evaluation exercise had been to review their operational, institutional and programming needs with a view to ascertaining how they could best serve the needs of members and associate members of the Commission in their respective mandated areas.

118. In summarizing the findings of the evaluation of EPOC, the Executive Secretary informed the Commission that the independent evaluator had proposed the relocation of EPOC to Suva, as it was no longer cost-effective to maintain the Centre at Port Vila. Moreover, there was increased emphasis on engaging and cooperating with Pacific regional agencies, most of

which were based at Suva, on an ongoing basis. The Executive Secretary had informed the Governments of Vanuatu and Fiji, as well as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, of the relocation, which was expected to be completed by mid-2004.

119. With regard to the CGPRT Centre, the Executive Secretary summarized the report of the Governing Board on its extraordinary session, held on 20 and 21 August 2003, at which the Board had reviewed the findings and recommendations of the evaluation of the CGRPT Centre. On that occasion, the members of the Board had reaffirmed the support of their Governments for the Centre, with possible increases in financial contributions by some member countries. The Board had agreed that improvement in the performance of the Centre was the responsibility not only of the Centre but also of the member countries and of ESCAP. There had been general agreement by the Board that the work of the Centre should be aligned with the ESCAP programme of work, the medium-term plan and the thematic priorities, particularly poverty reduction.

120. The Commission commended the Executive Secretary on his initiative, as part of ESCAP revitalization, to evaluate EPOC and the regional institutions with a view to enhancing their effectiveness. It expressed general satisfaction with the findings and recommendations of the evaluation reports. It was generally of the opinion that implementation of the recommendations emanating from the reports would lead to an increase in the efficiency and effectiveness of EPOC and the regional institutions.

121. While noting the need to strengthen the work of EPOC and the regional institutions, the Commission also acknowledged the benefits received by the members and associate members.

122. The Commission noted the generous contribution and support of the host Governments and donors to the regional institutions. It also recognized the financial constraints of the regional institutions and called for increased in-cash and in-kind contributions from members and associate members and donors. It recommended that funding sources be diversified and efforts made to mobilize donors such as the World Bank and ADB. In addition, members and associate members were urged to provide in-kind contributions, including experts on non-reimbursable loan.

123. The Commission welcomed the review of EPOC and its recommendation that EPOC strengthen its focus on the needs of Pacific island countries. It recognized the important role of EPOC as a forum for addressing the multisectoral interests of its members, particularly those related to the social and economic advancement of Pacific island developing countries.

124. The Commission appreciated the prospect of collaboration between EPOC and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in the context of the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting process. To that end, the Head of EPOC had been invited to attend the 2003 meeting of the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific, and it was expected that he would be invited to future meetings. The Commission also noted that the forthcoming review of the Forum Secretariat would take into account the institutional implications of relocating EPOC to Suva.

125. In reviewing the findings on the CGPRT Centre, the Commission expressed appreciation of the evaluation of the Centre within the framework of the revitalization of ESCAP and accepted the findings and recommendations of the Governing Board at its extraordinary session. It emphasized the importance of the Centre's activities for the development of sustainable agriculture in the region and reaffirmed its commitment to continuing to support the Centre. It agreed that the Centre needed to realign its activities with the thematic priorities of ESCAP and expand its programme activities to serve the needs of member countries. It held the view that the Centre should make efficient use of the available resources for its projects and operations. It was also suggested that another evaluation of the Centre be conducted after three years.

126. In reviewing the findings concerning SIAP, the Commission noted the Institute's effective efforts in promoting statistical capabilities in the member countries. It agreed that SIAP was generally performing well within its current niche and was highly regarded and supported by national statistical offices in the region.

127. While some valuable initiatives had been taken in the past few years, the Commission recognized that SIAP should give more attention to its other objective of assisting in the establishment and strengthening of statistical training capability through, inter alia, the modality of distance education and e-learning. The Commission also agreed that the Institute should significantly expand its activities under its outreach programme to better meet the statistical training needs of the region. In particular, sufficient attention should be given to the training needs with regard to monitoring progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, National Human Development Reports and the knowledge-based economy, as well as the requisite statistical vehicles, such as time-use surveys, household income and expenditure surveys, demographic and health surveys and administrative reporting systems. The Commission took note of the comment by the host Government that, considering its financial constraints, the staffing requirements of the expanded outreach programme should be met by using temporary staff instead of permanent staff, to avoid a financial burden in the long run.

128. The Commission agreed that SIAP's current courses had to be designed more explicitly in order to respond to the thematic priorities of ESCAP and the Millennium Development Goals. Regular planning and evaluation exercises should assess the contribution of SIAP activities to the achievement of those priorities.

129. The Commission recognized that statistical training at SIAP under the umbrella of the Tokyo Metropolitan Area (TMA) courses provided valuable training opportunities for the national statistical offices of the region. It noted that there was continuing strong demand for the training activities of SIAP, as they had been of great use to member countries in providing forums in which statisticians could exchange views and experiences. Several members and associate members requested that opportunities for the training of trainers be expanded to promote and strengthen national statistical training capabilities.

130. The Commission held the view that SIAP was well placed to take on the important role of coordinating the delivery of statistical training in the region with many other agencies and institutions. That measure would improve efficiency and reduce duplication of effort. In that regard, SIAP had to pursue a more purposeful strategy for effective consultations and partnerships with member countries and other stakeholders with a view to improving the harmonization of statistical methods in the whole region.

131. The Commission supported the new areas of statistical training that SIAP had developed. Several countries indicated their desire to collaborate with SIAP, through their national statistical centres, in jointly conducting some of the regional and subregional courses under its outreach programme. The Commission acknowledged that such collaboration would take advantage of the training expertise and facilities available in the region in implementing the work programme of SIAP. In addition, it would help countries to acquire valuable experience in conducting international training and provide the participants with experience in studying the statistical systems of other countries in the region.

132. The Commission advised that the concerned agencies in the members and associate members should adequately reflect the strong demand of their national statistical offices for training at the TMA-based SIAP courses in the needs survey conducted by JICA. It noted that otherwise countries might lose opportunities to send their statisticians to TMA-based courses on JICA fellowships.

133. The Commission welcomed the intention of the Government of Japan to make a cash contribution of US$ 1,752,700 and the equivalent of about US$ 1,668,500 in kind for the one-year period from April 2003 to March 2004. It also thanked the Government of Japan for its intention to provide to SIAP, through JICA, 63 fellowships for its annual TMA-based statistical training courses and 8 fellowships for an area-focused course for the Central Asian countries which were in the process of transition to market economies.

134. Commenting on the evaluation of APCTT, the Commission expressed appreciation of the useful activities of the Centre in the five thrust areas:

(a) Technology transfer support services for small and medium-sized enterprises;

(b) Technology management and innovation;

(c) Environmentally sound technologies;

(d) Emerging technologies;

(e) Women's entrepreneurship development.

It also commended the latest initiatives of the Centre aimed at leveraging the impact of its activities through harnessing the power of ICT.

135. The Commission advised that, in order to improve the effectiveness of APCTT activities, the Centre should engage in a more thorough needs assessment of its members. In particular, emphasis should be given to technology commercialization, high-technology transfer, technology parks and technology business incubator development, tech-entrepreneurship development, the building of IT-powered regional and cross-regional technology transfer networks, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, e-commerce and private sector involvement in the Centre's activities. The Commission also suggested that APCTT promote the sharing of experiences and best practices with regard to the transfer and adoption of relevant technologies in rural areas. Working groups of experts should be established in all five APCTT thrust areas. Comprehensive programme planning should be established to ensure the allocation of reasonable financial resources.

136. One delegation mentioned that his Government was not able to benefit fully from APCTT owing to external factors.

137. The Commission expressed the need for increased contributions to APCTT from the member countries in order to ensure its sustainability. It encouraged ESCAP to organize meetings for the representatives of the diplomatic community at New Delhi and Bangkok to deliberate on key issues relating to the Centre's activities and future strategy to be adopted for mobilizing resources.

138. The Commission endorsed the modality of secondment by member countries to APCTT of experts on non-reimbursable loan.

139. With regard to the post of Director of APCTT, which was currently vacant, one delegation drew attention to paragraph 20 of the Statutes of APCTT, which stated that the appointment should be made in consultation with the Board. That delegation emphasized the need to follow the established process and requested the secretariat to provide sufficient time and information to the Board concerning the recruitment process. The secretariat took note of the request and indicated that it would look into the matter.

140. The Commission requested APCTT to finalize a strategy for the establishment of an endowment fund, which had been endorsed at its fifty-seventh session.

141. The Executive Secretary concluded the discussions by thanking all members for their useful comments and support of his initiative to improve, as part of ESCAP revitalization, the effectiveness of EPOC and the regional institutions. He also announced his intention to attend the forthcoming meetings of the governing boards of all the institutions.

Theme topic for the sixtieth session of the Commission

142. The Commission had before it document E/ESCAP/1301.

143. The Commission considered the theme topic which had been agreed upon during the first phase of the fifty-ninth session, subject to a final decision by the Commission during the second phase, and later proposed to be amended by China at the two hundred and seventy-fourth session of ACPR on 25 July 2003. The Commission decided that the theme topic for its sixtieth session would be "Meeting the challenges in an era of globalization by strengthening regional development cooperation".

144. One delegation indicated that it would support the theme topic but suggested that the focus on development cooperation be broadened to capture new initiatives in the region.

Emerging issues and developments at the regional level

Poverty reduction

145. The Commission discussed the two documents before it: "Poverty reduction: developments, issues and strategies" (E/ESCAP/1268/Rev.1) and "Report of the Committee on Statistics on its thirteenth session" (E/ESCAP/1269). It supported the secretariat's strategy of assisting the members in reducing poverty as reflected in the first document. It noted that the multi-pronged strategy comprised the conduct of research on economic development prospects and policies that influenced poverty reduction, the gearing of operational activities towards documenting, testing and disseminating good practices in poverty reduction through pilot projects and adopting and replicating those practices along with implementing activities in the areas of trade and entrepreneurial development, environment, information, communication and space technology, and social development which had a concrete and practical orientation towards poverty reduction. The Commission endorsed the report of the Committee on Statistics, which highlighted several pertinent issues. It supported the recommendations of the Committee, including the initiatives relating to statistical capacity-building. In welcoming the work of the secretariat in the field of statistics, the Commission noted that continuous efforts in the priority areas identified by members and associate members would be necessary to strengthen many of the national statistical systems in the region.

146. The Commission noted with satisfaction that the Asian and Pacific region had made good progress towards reducing poverty. It further noted the efforts and achievements of a number of developing member countries in reducing poverty. However, it recognized with concern that the region still accounted for two thirds of the poverty in the world. That situation clearly demanded that poverty be addressed as a common challenge which needed renewed and concerted efforts by both Governments and international agencies.

147. The Commission acknowledged that poverty was a multidimensional development challenge and broad-based sustainable economic growth and social development were key elements of any framework for reducing poverty. It noted that successful achievement of either element required sound macroeconomic management and good governance. It also noted that sustained economic growth had contributed to the steady alleviation of absolute poverty in several member States in the Asian and Pacific region, highlighting the interrelationship between poverty and economic growth.

148. The Commission emphasized the importance of targeted poverty reduction programmes for the benefit of the hard-core poor, who were unable to benefit directly from economic growth and development. The impact evaluation of poverty reduction programmes was important to examine their success and further increase their effectiveness in benefiting the poor. The Commission expressed its appreciation of the secretariat's capacity-building assistance to countries for evaluating the impact of targeted poverty alleviation programmes.

149. While highlighting the importance of sustained macroeconomic stability through appropriate macro-economic policies, the Commission acknowledged that the facilitation of existing trade and the creation of new trade with improved access by the poor to assets, including land and financial assets, and the creation of an environment conducive to greater private sector participation could play vital roles in generating employment and business opportunities, achieving sustainable development and reducing poverty. It was equally important that the poor have access to formal credit facilities to start up or improve their businesses and skills. The Commission recommended that the secretariat carry out studies to explore appropriate financial frameworks that would ensure the poor equal access to credit facilities and promote domestic financial institutions that would work for the poor.

150. The Commission realized that, for certain developing countries, achieving economic growth and social development so as to make an appreciable contribution to poverty reduction could pose a challenge which could not be met without external support. For such countries, it urged the secretariat to enhance technical assistance and other types of support in the

area of poverty reduction, including national capacity-building training and exchange of best practices. In that regard, it welcomed the proposed focus on information-sharing and best practices as a strategy for poverty reduction.

151. The Commission appreciated the publication of the report *Promoting the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty Reduction*, jointly prepared by ESCAP and UNDP. While the target of poverty reduction was likely to be achieved at the regional level, several individual countries might not reach it. The findings of the report should be widely disseminated to generate further political commitment and mobilization of additional resources for achieving the Goals. As many stakeholders were involved in achieving them, there was a need for greater coordination, including among various United Nations bodies and agencies. Moreover, it was important that the reporting system on the achievement of the Goals should not place an additional burden on the countries.

152. The Commission agreed that poverty should be tackled through the enhancement of agricultural productivity, health care, educational standards, affordable access to information, communication and space technology, advancement of the status of women and weaker sections of society and promotion of wider political participation.

153. Noting the linkages between poverty and the environment, the Commission requested the secretariat to propose poverty reduction programmes and poverty-focused activities at the request of member countries, focusing on the link between ecological degradation and increased poverty, and to assist countries on request in promoting sustainable development practices. In that regard, it supported the advancement of the international development goals, recognizing that the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development agreement was crucial. It encouraged the secretariat to propose programmes to assist the member countries on request in implementing those landmark agreements.

154. The Commission urged member countries to promote local government coordination and collaboration, improve urban governance, implement municipal reforms and build municipal capacity, forge partnerships with community groups, civil society and the private sector, strengthen the integrated development of metropolis, suburbs and periphery and develop transport and communication infrastructure. It heard reports on urban poverty reduction programmes involving such items as slum improvement, microenterprise development, the provision of access for the urban poor to housing, housing finance and basic services, empowerment of the poor and people's participation in decision-making. It noted several examples of good practices in urban poverty reduction implemented by the member countries. With regard to rural-urban linkages, it highlighted the need to synchronize poverty reduction efforts in rural and urban areas, because of rural-urban migration and the urbanization of poverty.

155. The Commission stressed the importance of human security within the framework of poverty reduction and development based on the empowerment of individuals. Human security focused on the strengthening of human-centred efforts to protect the lives, livelihoods and dignity of individual human beings and realize the abundant potential inherent in each individual through their empowerment. The goal of the concept of human security was to create and sustain societies that enabled individual human beings to realize their full potential.

156. The Commission underlined the importance of indicators in illuminating policy matters with regard to poverty. It noted that the effectiveness and efficiency of poverty alleviation programmes were heavily dependent on the availability of indicators for their evaluation.

157. The Commission noted the importance of capacity-building activities in support of improved poverty statistics and greater harmonization of measurement methodologies, including the provision of advisory services. It recommended the sharing of good practices on poverty statistics and urged the secretariat to contribute to the preparation of a handbook on concepts, methods and practices in poverty statistics being developed by the United Nations Statistics Division. Such a handbook could be an important reference for developing countries in conducting household surveys and throw light on such issues as survey instruments and the frequency and content of surveys. It was also suggested that ESCAP should support the establishment of an expert group or network of institutions involved with poverty statistics at both the national and subregional levels, in order to provide a consultative forum on poverty measurement.

158. The Commission shared the view of the Committee on Statistics that the heightened global, regional and national interest in monitoring the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, had created a major opportunity for statistical capacity-building. It expressed the wish that such monitoring systems should be tuned so that they placed a minimal additional reporting burden on national statistical systems.

159. The Commission expressed the view that gender statistics, in particular sex-disaggregated statistics on issues such as literacy, employment, economic activities and migration, were needed to promote gender equity and ensure successful implementation of national poverty reduction strategies and programmes. It urged the secretariat to constantly give special attention to developing national capacities in that respect. It noted that proper capture of the economic activities of women was necessary to evaluate women's progress with regard to poverty.

160. The Commission noted the recommendations of the Committee on Statistics, as well as activities undertaken by countries, to improve disability statistics, especially in relation to implementing the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

161. The Commission noted that many countries in the region were still suffering from inadequate economic statistics, resulting in an inability to calculate basic data on such subjects as capital stocks. The secretariat was requested to provide assistance in that regard. The Commission discussed the holding of further technical meetings designed to provide an input into the 2007 revision of the International Standard Industrial Classification.

162. The Commission took note of the efforts of the Committee on Statistics to improve measures of economic activity, including measurement of the informal sector and the non-observed economy. In view of the role of the informal sector in many economies in the Asian and Pacific region, it was considered important that countries be informed of new data collection techniques and methods to capture and estimate the full production of the non-observed economy. The Commission therefore welcomed ESCAP's plans to host a meeting, together with OECD, where the relevance of those techniques for developing countries and economies in transition could be demonstrated and where national statisticians could improve their methodological knowledge and exchange experiences.

163. The Commission noted the progress made on preparations for the 2004 round of the International Comparison Programme (ICP), but expressed some concern about the adequacy of the funds to be provided by donor agencies. The view was expressed that ICP results should be utilized for making regional rather than global comparisons.

164. The Commission confirmed that systematic and internationally comparable measurement of the information society and knowledge-based economy had become a priority in the region and requested ESCAP to provide assistance and capacity-building in that area of statistics. It noted the interest of some countries in cooperating with the secretariat in that regard.

165. The Commission noted the institutional arrangements for future statistical work in the region, which included the establishment of an apex forum of official statisticians which could provide a regional input on a comprehensive range of topics to global discussions. It welcomed the focus of the new Subcommittee on Statistics on the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, which would make a strong positive contribution to the fight against poverty.

Managing globalization

166. Under the theme of managing globalization, the Commission had before it various documents reporting sectoral activities in the areas of trade and investment, transport and tourism, environment and sustainable development, and information, communication and space technology.

167. The Commission noted that, although the region had generally benefited from globalization, the beneficial impact had been uneven as it varied according to the levels of development of the countries. It therefore underscored the need for concerted efforts and cooperation among countries at different levels of development. It acknowledged the need to create a conducive environment for regional cooperation that could give a positive spin to the forces of globalization to promote economic and social development in the region.

168. The Commission noted that the Committee on Managing Globalization could make a considerable input by assisting developing countries and countries with economies in transition in responding adequately to the challenges of globalization. The Commission considered it necessary that there be a good balance between sectoral and intersectoral issues in the activities of the Committee. It further noted the importance of the main objectives of the Committee's work: analysing emerging global and regional economic problems, undertaking measures on implementation at the regional level of the decisions of global forums and providing guidance to its sectoral subcommittees.

Report of the Steering Group of the Committee on Regional Economic Cooperation on its fourteenth meeting

169. The Commission had before it document E/ESCAP/1276. It endorsed the report and urged that the recommendations contained therein be implemented. It requested the secretariat to continue its assistance in capacity-building in the areas of trade and investment. In that regard, particular attention should be paid to sustained investment liberalization, strengthening of the legal framework, institutional capacity-building, development of infrastructure for trade and investment, human resources development and private sector development, giving special attention to the development of SMEs and microenterprises.

Report of the Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development on its fourth session

Progress in the implementation of resolutions relating to the theme of managing globalization: resolution 51/8 on the implementation of the New Delhi Action Plan on Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific

170. The Commission had before it documents E/ESCAP/1274 and E/ESCAP/1297. It endorsed the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development on its fourth session and noted the practical importance and relevance of those recommendations.

171. The Commission stressed the vital importance of transport as the basic pillar for overall development of the economies of the region, especially for the reduction of poverty and integration into the global and regional economies. In particular, it emphasized that an integrated international intermodal transport system would contribute significantly to promoting efficient transport services and requested that the development of that system be given high priority in the secretariat's programme of work.

172. The Commission noted that in the least developed, landlocked and island developing countries and the economies in transition, special problems existed which intensified the difficulties in providing adequate and efficient transport infrastructure. It urged the secretariat to continue to devote specific attention to addressing the special problems of those countries in its programme of work and thereby assist them in enhancing access to markets and social opportunities.

173. With respect to its resolution 51/8 of 1 May 1995 on the implementation of the New Delhi Action Plan on Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific, the Commission reiterated its strong commitment to and support for the Seoul Declaration on Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific, including phase II of the Regional Action Programme (2002-2006) of the New Delhi Action Plan. It expressed appreciation to the secretariat for the activities undertaken so far to strengthen the capacity of member countries to develop and operationalize an integrated transport network in order to support mobility, trade and tourism through the completion of the missing links and upgrading of the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway and improve shipping and intermodal connections, including ports, taking into account the economic, social, environmental and safety impacts of transport on society.

174. The Commission stressed the necessity of project selection based on the needs of the countries and priorities in the region as well as the necessity of following concrete results-based approaches; it underlined the importance of the commitment and active participation of members for the successful implementation of the Regional Action Programme.

175. The Commission recognized the important role that private sector investment increasingly played in the development of transport infrastructure. It requested the secretariat to undertake a study on practical approaches to promote private sector investment in infrastructure development and prepare models of funding infrastructure development in the framework of private sector partnerships for the consideration of member countries.

176. The Commission endorsed the plan of action for phase VI of the Asian land transport infrastructure development (ALTID) project (2004-2005) as adopted by the Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development at its fourth session. It reiterated the importance of, and reaffirmed its support for, the ALTID project, particularly with regard to the planning and implementation of demonstration runs of container block trains along the Trans-Asian Railway Northern Corridor and the development of Asia-Europe transport corridors. It also strongly supported the secretariat's activities on the preparation of an Asian Highway agreement and highlighted the importance of the joint programme of work between ECE and ESCAP.

177. The Commission noted the progress made in the development of an intergovernmental agreement on the Asian Highway network and the organization of three subregional seminars on the agreement in preparation for the related intergovernmental meeting scheduled for November 2003. It further noted that such an agreement would play a catalytic role in the coordinated development of international highways in the region, as well as between Asia and Europe. It expressed the hope that the agreement could be concluded at the intergovernmental meeting.

178. The Commission appreciated the continuous support of the Government of Japan for the Asian Highway in terms of financing and expert inputs. It noted the statement by that Government with respect to the suggestion made concerning the draft intergovernmental agreement on the Asian Highway network during the Subregional Seminar on the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network for North-East Asian countries, held at Ulaanbaatar on 21 and 22 August 2003.

179. The Commission noted that bilateral discussions among neighbouring countries facilitated the implementation of regional agreements and also noted the offer of the Government of India to host the subregional seminar on an intergovernmental agreement on the Asian Highway network at New Delhi for the SAARC subregion.

180. The Commission noted the statement by Malaysia with respect to the ongoing negotiations with Singapore to resolve the issues of route alignment and numbering of the Asian Highway routes connecting the two countries.

181. The Commission requested the secretariat to take action to update the route alignment of the Trans-Asian Railway, including the Southern Corridor, prior to the establishment of a Trans-Asian Railway Working Group. The Commission expressed support for the organization of meetings of chief executives of railways of the ESCAP region.

182. The Commission noted that two ESCAP projects focusing on the North-East Asian subregion, namely, the development of an integrated shipping and port system in the North-East Asian subregion and an integrated international transport and logistics system for North-East Asia, could serve as best practices to be replicated in other subregions.

183. The Commission noted that only a few countries in the region could provide up-to-date logistics services and requested the secretariat to undertake a study on the best practices in that area and disseminate the information concerned.

184. The Commission noted that the development of transport corridors, such as the Singapore-Kunming rail link project, would improve and encourage the development of international trade, transit transport and tourism.

185. The Commission noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran was implementing a number of projects aimed at providing better, cheaper and faster transit conditions for the countries of the region. That country had also taken measures to harmonize transport standards and had signed international conventions and bilateral agreements relating to transport facilitation.

186. The Commission noted the request that the secretariat include programmes related to the development of inland water transport in its programme of work, with a focus on energy efficiency, safety, environmental friendliness and the development of policy frameworks for a shift in favour of inland water transport through marketing.

187. The Commission strongly supported the Plan of Action for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Asian and Pacific Region and reaffirmed its commitment to the implementation of the Plan. It was pleased to note that, under the Plan, a series of capacity-building seminars related to the sustainable development of tourism had been held or planned, including national seminars for Cambodia in June 2003, Mongolia in September 2003, Kyrgyzstan in November 2003 and Azerbaijan in 2004.

188. The Commission noted with satisfaction that the Seminar on Poverty Alleviation through Sustainable Tourism Development, held at Kathmandu in August 2003, had provided a useful forum at which to discuss specific measures to alleviate poverty through tourism. It requested the secretariat to further strengthen activities to enhance the contribution of tourism to poverty alleviation.

189. The Commission noted with appreciation that the Seminar on Crisis Management in Tourism would be held at Lombok, Indonesia, on 11 and 12 September 2003. It urged members to participate in that important seminar.

190. The Commission was pleased to note that the Network of Asia-Pacific Education and Training Institutes in Tourism (APETIT) continued to expand and that currently 163 education and training institutes and national tourism organizations in 37 countries and areas were participating in its activities. It noted with appreciation the offer of India to assist APETIT member institutes in training trainers and its preparedness to consider offering training programmes on tourism promotion for members upon specific request. It noted with interest that Malaysia had established a national tourism human resources council, which had formulated a competitive standard for tourism training and national occupational skills standards for the maintenance of quality services in the tourism industry.

191. The Commission noted the suggestion that the initiatives of the secretariat include activities related to the promotion of tourism in the Mekong-Ganga subregion and the promotion of Buddhist tourism circuits.

Report of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development on its fourth session

Progress in the implementation of resolutions relating to the theme of managing globalization: resolutions 57/2 on the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000, and 58/3 on the World Summit on Sustainable Development

Report on the regional follow-up to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

192. The Commission had before it documents E/ESCAP/1275, containing the report of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development on its fourth session, E/ESCAP/1297 on progress in the implementation of resolutions relating to the theme of managing globalization and E/ESCAP/1302 on regional follow-up to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

193. The Commission noted with appreciation that the Committee had deliberated on the preliminary analysis of the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development and had focused on the implementation of the outcome of the Summit at the regional and subregional levels. It noted that the report of the Committee contained a wide range of highly relevant issues; it endorsed the report, including its conclusions and recommendations.

194. The Commission supported the secretariat's programmes in capacity-building in strategic planning and management for integrated water resources management to meet the targets of the Millennium Development Goals and called for a holistic approach with public participation, transfer of technology and exchange of information to create sustainable water policies and practices.

195. The Commission encouraged the secretariat to continue to promote public awareness of water conservation, water-use efficiency, groundwater contamination, public participation in water management and sanitation issues, and to increase cooperation with member countries and subregional organizations to implement and expand those activities to commemorate the International Year of Freshwater 2003.

196. The Commission called upon the secretariat to continue to provide assistance to ESCAP members, at their request, in assessing their water resources and in monitoring the freshwater situation by applying the tools developed in the first *World Water Development Report*, as follow-up to the Third World Water Forum and the successful achievements of the United Nations, especially the World Water Assessment Programme.

197. The Commission noted the strong linkage between the achievements in combating natural disasters and poverty alleviation and encouraged the secretariat to strengthen regional and subregional disaster management through the exchange of information, community participation, exchange of experiences and transfer of technology. It called upon the secretariat to increase cooperation in programmes and activities in the area of the Caspian Sea.

198. The Commission extended its support to the secretariat's initiative in implementing relevant activities towards increased utilization of renewable energy, energy efficiency and subregional energy cooperation as follow-up to the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. It noted with interest the efforts undertaken by several countries in assigning high priority to the development of renewable energy resources. It noted with appreciation the offer of India to share its training facilities with, and support demonstration projects in, other developing countries.

199. The Commission supported the capacity-building efforts of the secretariat for sustainable development through training workshops, advisory services, expert meetings and exchange of best practices. It stressed that such efforts should be continued.

200. The Commission appreciated the initiative of the secretariat in promoting subregional energy cooperation in North-East Asia. Noting the successful outcome of the Meeting of Senior Officials on Energy Cooperation in North-East Asia, held at Vladivostok, Russian Federation, in April 2003, it requested the secretariat to continue to support the process in order to realize the potential for energy development in the subregion.

201. The Commission commended the progress made so far in the implementation of the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment, especially on the development of pilot projects and case studies in member countries. It noted with appreciation the financial support and partnership efforts of the Government of Japan in promoting the implementation of the Kitakyushu Initiative in the region.

202. The Commission expressed appreciation of the activities that the secretariat was undertaking to promote subregional cooperation in the implementation of the North-East Asian Subregional Programme on Environmental Cooperation. It commended the ongoing efforts in implementing the project on the control of dust and sandstorms in the subregion.

203. The Commission was informed about the World Climate Change Conference, to be held at Moscow from 29 September to 3 October 2003, and encouraged countries in the region to participate actively in the Conference.

204. The Commission noted that the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development signified a new global commitment to sustainable development. The Commission on Sustainable Development had rightly emphasized the role of the regional commissions in the implementation of the Plan of Implementation. It was therefore recommended that ESCAP play a substantive role in the implementation of the Plan, including the organization of regional forums, in close collaboration with other United Nations organizations such as UNDP and UNEP, as well as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

205. The Commission recognized that the seven regional initiatives in the Phnom Penh Regional Platform on Sustainable Development for Asia and the Pacific captured regional priorities and concerns and were clearly and strongly echoed in the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. It decided to implement programmes in conformity with the decisions contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and those of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eleventh session.

206. The Commission urged the secretariat to mobilize additional resources to translate the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development into concrete action and full implementation. It recognized the need for the active participation of major stakeholders in the implementation of the Plan, while acknowledging the primary role of Governments. It endorsed the initiative to organize a regional senior officials forum to undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Plan in the region.

207. The Commission supported the plan for a regional meeting in October 2003 to review the implementation of the Plan in relation to the first cluster areas of water, sanitation and human settlements and develop a regional report for the Commission on Sustainable Development at its twelfth session.

208. While welcoming "Type II" partnership initiatives as a means of implementing the Plan, the Commission noted that those initiatives should not be a substitute for, but should supplement, the commitments made.

Regional developments and issues

209. The Commission had before it a synthesis document (E/ESCAP/1273) presenting national and regional developments and focusing on selected cross-cutting issues in the fields of trade and investment, environment and sustainable development, information, communication and space technology, and transport and tourism in addressing the challenges of globalization.

210. The Commission underscored the relevance of adopting an integrated approach in addressing cross-cutting issues as listed in the document. It recognized the complexity in the linkages of such issues and therefore the need to strengthen technical assistance activities to enhance national capacities to address such issues effectively at the national and international levels.

Trade and investment

211. The Commission stressed that a universal, open, predictable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system was a crucial component in managing globalization. The system should be shaped so as to ensure that it became a positive force for development and that all countries could secure a fair share in the growth of world trade commensurate with their economic needs.

212. The Commission noted that its subprogramme on trade and investment was a priority area; it stressed the need for the effective implementation of resolution 57/5 of 25 April 2001 on the integration of Asian and Pacific developing countries and economies in transition into the international trading system.

213. The Commission requested the secretariat to continue to accord high priority to its capacity-building programme on WTO trade negotiations, not only in the implementation of various WTO commitments, but also to strengthen the capacity of member countries to draw benefits from an open, rules-based multilateral trading system.

214. The Commission noted that the Doha Ministerial Declaration placed the needs and interests of developing countries at the heart of the work programme, but cautioned that with the approaching Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference, to be held at Cancún, Mexico, from 10 to 14 September 2003, the real issue was how the Doha outcome would be carried forward with concrete development results. It stressed that implementation issues of concern to developing countries should be addressed so as to generate more inclusive participation by those countries in the multilateral trading system and a more equitable distribution of the benefits of trade.

215. The Commission noted that as the Doha-mandated negotiations approached their mid-point mark, the multilateral trading system should uphold the principle of fairness in trade, particularly with regard to the implementation of special and differential treatment commensurate with the stage of development of ESCAP members and associate members.

216. The Commission noted that almost half of its members and associate members had yet to become WTO members. It requested the secretariat, through its network of acceding countries, to study the experiences of countries that had recently acceded to WTO and share those experiences with countries in the process of accession.

217. The Commission noted that new and prospective members of WTO, particularly the least developed countries and countries with economies in transition, were making extensive commitments as part of their WTO accession process. It requested the secretariat to extend technical assistance and advisory services in that process and in the implementation of WTO commitments.

218. The Commission stressed the importance of improved market access as a major tool for poverty alleviation and development. The reduction of trade-distorting subsidies, tariff peaks and tariff escalation on export products of interest to developing countries was a major area in which the Doha-mandated negotiations should achieve development-friendly results. The Commission cautioned that gains in market access should not be nullified by the imposition of trade-restrictive non-tariff measures. It noted with concern the high prevalence of anti-dumping measures imposed on exports from the region and requested the secretariat, in collaboration with other international organizations, to provide the necessary technical assistance.

219. The Commission requested that the secretariat undertake an in-depth assessment of the proliferation of regional and bilateral trade agreements and their contribution to regional economic development and enhanced trade and investment flows in a manner that was supportive of the multilateral trading system.

220. The Commission noted that trade facilitation had a significant impact in increasing international trade flows and trade efficiency. The importance of providing technical assistance for capacity-building in the area of trade facilitation, in particular to support developing countries in their accession to WTO and ongoing WTO discussions on trade facilitation, was emphasized in view of the limited capacity and diverse stages of development, especially infrastructure and capacity development, in the developing countries of the ESCAP region.

221. The Commission stressed that in addition to gaining meaningful market access, developing countries needed assistance in strengthening their supply-side capacity so that they could make effective use of the improved market access expected from trade liberalization.

222. The Commission noted the importance of private sector participation in trade and investment and urged the secretariat to strengthen the SME sector in its programme of work, which included issues such as

microfinancing, export competitiveness, the application of IT and e-commerce, the implications of WTO agreements for the business sector of the region, comparative studies on best practices for SME development and forging linkages between transnational corporations and SMEs.

Trade and transport facilitation

223. The Commission noted that trade investment and transport facilitation were critical issues that should be considered by the Committee on Managing Globalization. In addition, it considered that the linkage between ICT and transport was essential for the development of modern transport infrastructure, particularly for the Trans-Asian Railway and the Asian Highway.

Trade, environment and development

224. The Commission requested the secretariat to strengthen the capacities of developing member countries in international negotiations on trade and the environment, especially in terms of the relationship between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the relevant provisions of the WTO Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights.

225. The Commission recognized that trade and environmental protection could be mutually supportive and that trade could contribute to development and hence generate the resources needed to implement environmental measures.

226. The Commission emphasized that measures taken to safeguard the environment should not be discriminatory or used as a disguised form of protection. Trade restrictions were not a solution to environmental problems. Instead, international cooperation, transfer of technology and technical assistance were better means of dealing with global environmental problems.

Role of ICT

Progress in the implementation of resolutions relating to the theme of managing globalization: resolutions 56/3 on regional cooperation on space applications for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific and 57/4 on regional cooperation in information and communication technologies for development

227. The Commission expressed the view that since ICT was a major driving force of globalization, it had a significant effect as well in assisting developing countries in managing the impact of globalization, by accelerating the development of member countries and increasing the competitiveness of their economies because of its tremendous economic and social implications. It had also brought significant changes to markets, production, services and skills requirements, expanded educational and health-care opportunities and improved the quality of life. A number of countries had enjoyed major enhancements in productivity and competitiveness in their economic and industrial sectors, in particular, SMEs, through the effective use and diffusion of ICT.

228. The Commission stressed the need for the creation of favourable policy and regulatory frameworks conducive to the adoption and diffusion of ICT, citing digital literacy or e-learning initiatives, competent human resources and the creation of the requisite infrastructure. It was noted that enhancing literacy was a major challenge to be addressed for equitable access and use of ICT in developing countries. In that respect, e-learning initiatives should incorporate new ways of learning and promote satellite and web-based distance education. While emphasizing the importance of Governments in promoting a favourable climate for ICT awareness in the economy and wider society, the Commission emphasized the need to establish public-private partnerships that would encourage innovative programmes in human resources and infrastructure development, enhancement of rural teledensity, development, research and technology transfer. The secretariat was requested to identify and consolidate best practices in such partnerships, particularly in relation to infrastructure development, and to seek the assistance of Governments interested in that endeavour.

229. The Commission noted that affordability was also a critical issue in ensuring a higher level of penetration of ICT, particularly the Internet. While lowering the cost of telecommunication services could contribute significantly to promoting wider use of the Internet, it was also important that software be made more affordable to people in developing member countries. One way of doing that was to promote the development and utilization of open-source software, which was cheaper and not encumbered by patents and other restrictions imposed by producers of current software.

230. While its members had the primary responsibility for ICT development, the Commission felt that ESCAP could play a leading role in promoting regional cooperation in ICT, including in sharing experiences and best practices, establishing regional networks, human resources development, coordinating the regional preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society and following up on the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Furthermore, in noting the cross-cutting nature of ICT, the Commission felt that the secretariat could deal with such multidisciplinary issues as transport and ICT, and trade promotion and ICT; in particular, the secretariat could explore the possibility of using the Trans-Asian Railway and the Asian Highway projects for ICT infrastructure development.

231. The Commission welcomed the establishment of the Information, Communication and Space Technology Division in the ESCAP secretariat and recognized its usefulness for building the requisite

capacities and competencies of developing member States in their adoption, use and development of ICT. It noted with appreciation the activities implemented by the secretariat in cooperation with members, such as co-organization of the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference for the World Summit on the Information Society, held at Tokyo in January 2003; the Asia-Pacific Conference on Cybercrime and Information Security, held at Seoul in November 2002; and the Expert Group Meeting on a Regional Road Map towards the Information Society in Asia and the Pacific, the Expert Group Meeting on Poverty Mapping and Monitoring Using Information Technology and the Expert Group Meeting on the Use of Space Technology for Poverty Alleviation, held at Bangkok in August 2003. It noted with appreciation the generous assistance provided by the Governments of Japan, the Republic of Korea and Thailand in hosting ESCAP activities related to ICT aimed at narrowing the digital divide in the region.

232. The Commission appreciated the progress made in the implementation of resolutions 56/3 of 7 June 2000 on regional cooperation on space applications for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific and 57/4 of 25 April 2001 on regional cooperation in information and communication technologies for development. It also appreciated ESCAP efforts in addressing core issues of common concern, such as disaster management using space technology applications. The Commission recommended that regional cooperative mechanisms be institutionalized to facilitate equitable sharing of the benefits of space technology development and applications by all countries in the region, in particular in various fields of space technology applications for disaster management. Noting the importance of applications of space technology for sustainable development, it also recommended that the secretariat, when continuing to facilitate the exchange of information and know-how on space technology applications for sustainable development, should focus particularly on developing joint projects with practical outputs.

233. The Commission noted with appreciation the continued support of China, France and India to the ESCAP regional cooperation programme in space technology applications for natural disaster management and sustainable development, as well as the offer of the Russian Federation to share its expertise in the field of satellite communications, navigation and remote sensing for sustainable development. It also appreciated the offer of Malaysia to support capacity-building and training activities in remote sensing and satellite technology development and that of the Islamic Republic of Iran to share its experience in geomatics with other members of ESCAP. It recognized the need and interest of member countries to cooperate in the field of space technology applications at the subregional, regional and international levels.

234. The Commission recommended that the secretariat initiate preparations for the third ministerial conference on space applications for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific and consider concrete steps towards an institutional framework for regional space applications and development.

Sustainable production and consumption

235. The Commission noted with appreciation the effort of the Government of Indonesia in organizing the Asia-Pacific Expert Meeting on Promoting Sustainable Production and Consumption Patterns, at Yogyakarta, Indonesia, from 21 to 23 May 2003, which had identified priorities for regional and subregional frameworks and initiatives.

236. The Commission also noted that an international expert group meeting organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at Marrakech, Morocco, in June 2003 had adopted a 10-year framework of programmes for sustainable production and consumption patterns. It further noted the proposal to link the regional process to the ESCAP legislative process on a continuous basis up to and beyond the 2010 session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Report on the Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery

Progress in the implementation of resolutions relating to the theme of managing globalization: resolution 58/5 on the establishment of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery

237. The Commission had before it documents E/ESCAP/1277/Rev.1 and E/ESCAP/1297.

238. The Commission noted the progress made in the negotiations between the Government of China and the ESCAP secretariat on the host country headquarters agreement; the Centre was expected to start its operations at Beijing shortly. The Commission reiterated its appreciation of the generous financial support and host facilities provided by the Government of China. It also expressed appreciation to the Government of Finland for its generous financial support.

239. The Commission requested that the Centre immediately develop a medium- to long-term road map by prioritizing its work programme. It noted with satisfaction that the three major areas, exchange of information on agro-mechanization and processing, prototype exchange and transfer of technology, and promotion of research and development in agro-processing and agro-based industries, were in line with the priority needs of the developing countries. It recommended that activities in the areas of agro-electronics, rural energy and other poverty alleviation activities also be accorded priority, with a view to making APCAEM a centre of excellence, as stipulated in its Statute.

240. The Commission recommended that the Centre be involved in the dissemination of information on successful technologies for promoting the involvement of rural women in agro-processing activities, which would provide further employment and income generation in rural areas.

241. The Commission emphasized that the Centre should strengthen its activities in the areas of farm machinery and agro-engineering, which were beneficial to the rural poor. It felt that the Centre, while strengthening its activities aimed at assisting small farmers in alleviating poverty, should also engage in new and emerging technologies, especially in the field of biotechnology.

242. The Commission urged the Centre to mobilize additional resources for programme activities, with a view to making itself self-supporting in the future.

243. The Commission noted the secretariat's proposal on the future work programme of the Centre, which was to be in line with the thematic areas of ESCAP. It also noted that initiatives had been taken for project formulation in the areas of (a) assisting members of the Centre in validating their agricultural mechanization plans for national farming systems, (b) establishing an agricultural, sanitary and phytosanitary resource unit to support member countries in the market-access process, (c) promoting agro-technology-related SME incubation systems, (d) organizing a regional conference on agro-based enterprise development and agricultural biotechnology, (e) integrating rural disabled persons into sustainable social development by providing better agricultural tools and (f) establishing a network for used farm machinery exchange to improve self-sufficiency in agricultural production.

Emerging social issues

244. The Commission had before it documents E/ESCAP/1271 and Corr. 1 and E/ESCAP/1279-1281, relating to emerging social issues. It commended the secretariat on the quality and thoroughness of the documents.

Report of the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference

245. The Commission endorsed the report of the Conference as contained in document E/ESCAP/1271 and Corr. 1. It noted that the eradication of poverty required economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability. It stressed that demographic and population factors should be fully integrated into national, sectoral and local planning. The Commission noted that, while much progress had been made in the region in population programmes, many poorer groups still lacked adequate health services, including reproductive health care. It recommended that efforts to provide access to basic needs and services be strengthened and integrated into the planning process at all levels. It further indicated that a pro-poor macroeconomic model should be accompanied by a people-centred development approach and be based on good governance within each country and at the international level. It noted that for poverty eradication to be successful, gender equality needed to be achieved. Furthermore, it pointed to the need for integrating economic efficiency with broader social objectives and considerations.

246. Several delegations reaffirmed their Governments' support for the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, adopted at Cairo in 1994, and stressed the importance of reproductive health and reproductive rights in order to improve maternal health and child survival. The Commission noted that such issues as migration and population ageing needed to be addressed in overall population policies.

Rights-based approach to social development

247. The Commission concurred that a rights-based approach was an effective way to address such social issues as the empowerment of women, persons living with HIV/AIDS, population ageing and equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. It called upon the secretariat to assist members and associate members in addressing emerging social issues by building capacity through training programmes, technical assistance and the identification and promotion of successful practices. It also requested the secretariat to review the implementation of regional programmes of action endorsed by the Commission. The Commission adopted resolution 59/2 on strengthening social safety in the Asian and Pacific region.

248. The Commission stressed the importance of gender mainstreaming in education. Barriers to women's and girls' access to education needed to be eliminated to promote gender equality. Several delegations expressed their countries' commitment to reducing the gender gap in education.

249. The Commission called for increasing women's access to paid employment and eliminating barriers to women in the workplace. It emphasized the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment through access to employment, land and property ownership and productive resources. It called for the strengthening of social protection and social security schemes and improvement of their coverage for women.

250. The Commission stressed the importance of women's equal participation in decision-making. It emphasized that increased representation of women in government, *including local government, should be* given high priority in order to promote gender equality. It commended the efforts made by members to encourage greater representation of women in the political arena. In particular, it expressed support for

the continuing implementation of the Phitsanulok Declaration on the Advancement of Women in Local Government adopted by the Asia-Pacific Summit of Women Mayors and Councillors, held at Phitsanulok, Thailand, from 19 to 22 June 2001.

251. The Commission emphasized the importance of addressing all emerging social issues in an integrated manner, keeping in mind that poverty constituted an important backdrop to all interlinked social issues, including health-related issues. It stressed the importance of improving access to essential health services. In particular, it identified women, young people and the rural population, especially those who were marginalized, as the population groups that merited the special attention of Governments in their efforts to improve the health systems and health service provision in their countries.

252. The Commission noted with concern the spread of HIV/AIDS, trafficking in women and children, and sexual abuse and sexual exploitation among children and youth in the region. It stressed the importance of national legislation and international and regional cooperation in tackling those issues and called upon the secretariat to play an effective role. The necessity of education in the field of reproductive and sexual health was underscored. The Commission recognized with appreciation the secretariat's programme to protect the rights of children and youth through its programme to combat sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

Shanghai Implementation Strategy

253. The Commission endorsed the Shanghai Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 and the Macao Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific 1999, as contained in document E/ESCAP/1280. It called for cooperation among government agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in addressing the issues of population ageing. The structural effects of ageing needed to be integrated into national policies on poverty reduction, health and social protection. The Commission stressed that policies on ageing needed to incorporate support for the financial security, health-care, nutrition, shelter, training and information needs of older persons.

254. The Commission emphasized that gender aspects of population ageing needed to be taken into account since the number of women often exceeded that of men at older ages. The types of diseases and impairments among older persons differed by gender, as did the types of care and support required.

Report of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Conclude the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002

255. The Commission took note of the report of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting, as contained in document E/ESCAP/1281. It supported a rights-based approach to the social integration of persons with disabilities, as specified in the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, which had been adopted at the Meeting.

256. The Commission stressed the importance of education, training and employment in order to equalize opportunities for persons with disabilities. It also called for increased attention to be given to the prevention of disability and for strengthened programmes of community-based rehabilitation. It noted that non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations had an important role to play in promoting the full participation of people with disabilities. The Commission urged the secretariat to continue its efforts to assist members and associate members in implementing the Biwako Millennium Framework.

257. The Commission adopted resolution 59/3 on regional implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific during the Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012.

Least developed, landlocked and island developing countries

258. The Commission had before it the report of the Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries on its sixth session (E/ESCAP/1303 and Corr.1) and heard an oral report on the secretariat's activities relevant to the island developing countries. It noted with satisfaction the substantive outcome of the sixth session of the Special Body and generally agreed with the recommendations contained in the report on transit transport issues in landlocked and transit developing countries and the implications of the post-Doha trade agenda for the integration of the least developed countries into the global economic system, while recognizing that the Asian Action Plan on Transit Transport Cooperation was a regional input for the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, held at Almaty on 28 and 29 August 2003, and that further action on that subject would be in accordance with the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries. The Commission further noted that the primary responsibility for establishing efficient transit systems lay with the landlocked and transit developing countries on a bilateral basis.

259. The Commission noted that the International Ministerial Conference had reaffirmed the commitment

of the international community to work together to overcome the challenges faced by landlocked and transit developing countries. It urged all stakeholders to implement the Almaty Programme of Action adopted by the Conference.

260. The Commission urged all members to support the draft resolution circulated by the Government of Bangladesh on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 during the current session of the Commission. It adopted resolution 59/4 on the implementation of the Programme of Action.

261. The mid-term review of the implementation of the Programme of Action was expected to be conducted in 2005. The Commission therefore decided that the regional review of the implementation of the Programme of Action should be undertaken at the seventh session of the Special Body early in 2005.

262. The Commission expressed appreciation of the ongoing assistance to the least developed, landlocked and island developing countries provided by some member countries, including neighbouring transit and island developing countries.

263. The Commission noted that since the challenges facing island developing countries stemmed from their natural characteristics, communication and transport, as well as access to basic services and inland and offshore resources, needed to be improved. Noting that the common development challenges confronting those countries could be discussed in its various forums, the Commission urged the secretariat to facilitate the sharing of experiences, lessons learned and best practices among its member countries, and urged greater cooperation in formulating national strategies and policies for intersectoral activities at the central and regional levels. The Commission also urged greater use of relevant regional centres and institutions to enhance cooperation among island developing countries of the region.

264. In order to strengthen the capacity of officials to design and implement effective strategies to deal with emerging urban poverty issues in the Pacific island developing countries, the Commission agreed that the eighth session of the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries, which was scheduled to be held at Shanghai, China, in 2004, would consider "Experiences and challenges in urban management issues in Pacific island countries" as its theme topic.

Reports of regional intergovernmental bodies

Asian and Pacific Development Centre

265. The Commission had before it a summary of the annual report of the Asian and Pacific Development Centre for 2002, transmitted for information under a note by the secretariat (E/ESCAP/1290).

266. The Director of the Centre reported that its General Council had met three times in 2002 to deliberate on the report of an independent study team on the regional role of the Centre. Despite a very favourable report, a resolution had been adopted to dissolve the Centre.

267. The Director further reported that, despite the uncertainties and the limited resources available, the Centre had continued to implement programmes and projects for its members. A total of 18 programmes had been completed in 2002, including a regional summit on microfinance policy and governance, held at Bangkok in March 2002, in partnership with ESCAP, the Asian and Pacific Regional Agricultural Credit Association and the Association of the Asian Confederation of Credit Unions; an international trade fair-cum-conference on globalization and SME development at Kuala Lumpur in June 2002; and a conference, "Towards Asia and Pacific renaissance: recovery, regional cooperation and the public sector", held in Kedah, Malaysia, in September-October 2002.

268. The Director also reported that 2002 had been another difficult year financially, with contributions from members having declined further to US$ 478,000. However, International House income had increased by 67 per cent to US$ 270,000.

269. The Director expressed deep gratitude for the continued support provided by member countries, notably the host country, Malaysia.

270. A number of representatives voiced their regret at the possibility that the Centre would be closed later in the year.

Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia

271. The Commission had before it the report of the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia (CCOP), transmitted for information under a note by the secretariat (E/ESCAP/1291/Rev.1).

272. The Commission noted with appreciation that CCOP, in accordance with its Strategic Plan, had devoted itself to promoting capacity-building, technology transfer, exchange of information, institutional linkages for sustainable resource development, management of geoinformation, geohazard mitigation and protection of the environment. A total of 13 technical meetings/workshops aimed at knowledge and technology transfer had been successfully attended by 417 participants from the member countries. In the georesources sector, the final activity of the project on resource evaluation and planning, the Exploration Promotion Forum for CCOP Member Countries, with the support of the Government of Norway, had been completed and a new project on petroleum policy and management was currently being

implemented. Seminars and workshops had been organized on deep-water exploration and field development, natural gas development, gas exploration, production and utilization, interactive mapping techniques for the construction of geological reservoirs and a geothermal resource database. The activities in the geo-environment sector had focused on the implementation of the development of techniques for landslide hazard analysis. The geo-information sector had continued with activities related to the setting up of the Southeast Asian Network for a Geological Information System, the Geoscience Research Information Dissemination Network programme and a training programme on geodata management.

273. The Commission also noted the strong commitment by the member countries and the enhanced level of support of cooperating countries and organizations. It was also pleased to note the close cooperation between CCOP and ESCAP in undertaking joint activities and information exchange.

274. The Commission noted with appreciation the assistance extended by Denmark, France, Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States and other cooperating countries and organizations for CCOP activities. It noted with appreciation the support of the Government of Thailand through the Department of Mineral Resources in providing excellent facilities for the smooth operation of CCOP in Bangkok.

Mekong River Commission

275. The Commission had before it the report of the Mekong River Commission (MRC), transmitted for information under a note by the secretariat (E/ESCAP/1292) and presented by a representative of the MRC Joint Committee.

276. The Commission noted with appreciation important achievements and progress by MRC in 2002 in consolidating the comprehensive programmes covering core, support and sector programmes by adopting the programme approach to support the basin-wide strategies of the member countries. Under the MRC core programme, the Commission noted the following important achievements: (a) the second milestone of the Water Utilization Programme had been reached when the MRC Council had approved the Preliminary Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement in November 2002; (b) the Basin Development Plan Programme had been launched at Bangkok in February 2002 to ensure coordination of development activities in the Mekong Basin at the national and regional levels; and (c) technical guidelines and policy advice for a transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment System, including 7 training modules and 20 case studies, had been developed and translated into the riparian languages, in May 2002, under the Environment Programme. Regarding the complex flood problems, which affected many millions of people in the Lower Mekong Basin, the Commission noted MRC's further efforts to implement the MRC Flood Management and Mitigation Strategy adopted in the previous year, with the approval of the Flood Management and Mitigation Programme by the MRC Council in 2002. The Commission also took note of important achievements in various other aspects of the management of water and related resources in the Mekong River Basin, such as fisheries, watershed management, hydrology, navigation and capacity-building programmes.

277. The Commission noted that the support extended to MRC by donors had remained strong in 2002 and that support for the Flood Management and Mitigation Programme had increased. It also noted with satisfaction that the MRC dialogue with the upstream riparian States, China and Myanmar, had achieved a significant step forward in 2002 with the signing of the Agreement on the Provision of Hydrological Information of the Lancang/Mekong River in Flood Season with the Ministry of Water Resources of China on 1 April 2002, to permit better water-level forecasts in the Lower Mekong Basin.

278. The Commission was pleased to note that in September 2002 the Brisbane River Symposium had awarded MRC the Thiess Services International Riverprize, the first award to a river basin organization comprising developing countries, to recognize MRC's excellence in river basin management.

Typhoon Committee

279. The Commission had before it the report of the Typhoon Committee, transmitted for information under a note by the secretariat (E/ESCAP/1293), and presented by a representative of the Committee.

280. The Commission noted with appreciation important achievements in 2002 in the meteorological component, including observations, forecasts and warnings of typhoons, in the hydrological component, including flood forecasts and warning, and on natural disaster reduction and related progress of work by the Committee and its members. It noted with appreciation the important role played by the Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre at Tokyo in cyclone-related early warnings through its continued provision of numerical weather products to the Committee members.

281. The Commission noted the improvement in meteorological satellite facilities and observations made available by various Committee members for better regional cooperation and the increase in the subregional activities of the Committee in the fields of meteorology, hydrology, training and research, and disaster prevention and preparedness, including an increase in research and improvement of forecasts. It took particular note of the decision by the Committee to adopt the strategic approach in the implementation of the new Regional Cooperation Programme

Implementation Plan, which had been reformulated in the previous year, to ensure effective achievement of the priority objectives of the Committee. The Commission was pleased to note several concrete results of the implementation of priority follow-up activities recommended by the 2001 comprehensive review of the hydrological component and of disaster prevention and preparedness, such as flood hazard mapping and flash flood and sediment disaster warning, by most of the Committee members in cooperation with ESCAP, WMO, the Typhoon Committee Secretariat (TCS) and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of Japan. The Commission also took note of the contribution of the Committee's activities in enhancing public awareness on typhoon-related disasters through its active participation in the Flood Day during the Third World Water Forum, held at Kyoto, Japan, in March 2003. The Commission noted the continued support provided by ESCAP to various activities of the Committee members and the valuable contribution of WMO to the work of the Typhoon Committee since its establishment.

282. The Commission expressed gratitude to the Government of Thailand for hosting the thirty-fifth session of the Committee at Chiang Mai in November 2002 and to the Government of the Philippines for its continued hosting of TCS, and for providing a full-time meteorologist and support staff and the continued services of the Coordinator of TCS. It also expressed appreciation to the Government of Japan for the continued services of the Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre and the continued support provided by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of Japan.

Panel on Tropical Cyclones

283. The Commission had before it the report of the Panel on Tropical Cyclones, transmitted under a note by the secretariat (E/ESCAP/1294), which was introduced by a representative of the Panel.

284. The Commission noted with appreciation the important achievements of the Panel in 2002 and its contribution to disaster reduction and preparedness measures through monitoring, forecasting and disseminating information on tropical cyclones and hydrological hazards and the excellent cooperation among its members in those activities. It expressed particular appreciation of the improvement in monitoring facilities and data exchange among several member countries of the Panel to enhance the effectiveness of flood forecasting in international river basins and urged that such cooperation be further strengthened.

285. The Commission also noted the comprehensive survey aimed at further strengthening cooperation among the members on cyclone-related disaster reduction, carried out with the assistance of the ESCAP secretariat in cooperation with WMO and the Technical Support Unit of the Panel in 2002/03, and welcomed its decision to undertake priority activities recommended by the survey and the importance attached by the Panel to capacity-building in all components of its work programme.

286. It noted the support provided by the ESCAP secretariat for various activities of the Panel, especially those related to the hydrological and disaster preparedness components of its work, and the continuing valuable contribution of WMO to the work of the Panel over the years.

287. The Commission expressed appreciation to the Government of Pakistan for organizing the thirtieth session of the Panel at Islamabad in March 2003 and for the support provided to the Panel in hosting the Technical Support Unit and providing the services of a coordinator and a meteorologist. It noted with appreciation the valuable contribution of India to the work of the Panel and its continuous support, especially the forecasting services of the Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre at New Delhi. The Commission urged donor countries and institutions to provide support to the work of the Panel and directed the ESCAP secretariat to continue to provide the Panel with substantive support within the framework of its own programme of work.

Ministerial Round Table

HIV/AIDS

288. The Ministerial Round Table on HIV/AIDS was divided into two parts. In the first part, the Executive Secretary delivered a multimedia presentation on the theme topic on integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region, followed by statements by H.E. Mr. Festus Gontebanye Mogae, President of Botswana, and Dr. Nafis Sadik, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific. The second part comprised an interactive session.

Executive Secretary

289. The Executive Secretary's multimedia presentation focused on the need for immediate action to tackle HIV/AIDS as a development challenge. The key messages of the presentation included the following:

(a) HIV/AIDS threatened to undo the region's achievements of the previous 50 years;

(b) As the region with the largest population base in the world, even a low prevalence rate translated into massive numbers of infections;

(c) Confronting the taboo nature of HIV/AIDS issues, such as sex, drugs and prejudices, required courage to engage in open discussion of those issues;

(d) The illegality of certain high-risk behaviours fuelled the spread of the virus;

(e) Adequate resources, as well as the commitment and leadership of heads of Government and State, were crucial for expanded, strategic and comprehensive responses to turn the tide of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

290. Ninety-five per cent of the world's people living with HIV/AIDS were in developing countries. Underdevelopment contributed directly to the spread of HIV/AIDS and its impact on the lives of the poor.

291. To tackle HIV/AIDS as a development challenge, Governments must draw on the region's rich experience in combining social and economic policies to improve people's lives and incorporate HIV concerns into poverty reduction.

President of Botswana

292. In his keynote address, the President of Botswana underscored the extent and severity of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa, which held many lessons for other regions of the world. The first lesson was that the international community must marshal the will and resources to stop the spread of the scourge of HIV/AIDS. The pandemic had the potential to decimate large populations, aggravate poverty, increase income disparities between rich and poor countries and easily cross borders.

293. He pointed out that HIV/AIDS directly affected one of the main factors of production, labour, through absenteeism, morbidity and mortality. It also affected capital and land indirectly, because reduced labour productivity made it difficult to optimize production. The loss of savings potential owing to the pandemic also had an adverse effect on investment and economic growth.

294. In his experience, political leaders at all levels had a crucial role in providing direction on HIV/AIDS policies and programmes and allocating more resources and infrastructure for effective implementation. He strongly urged the Asian and Pacific region to avoid the mistake of inertia and inaction and to bring the HIV/AIDS epidemic under control before it was too late. The current low HIV prevalence rates in the region provided a window of opportunity for leaders in the region to make a decisive difference.

Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific

295. The Special Envoy expressed the view that HIV/AIDS was an unusual pandemic that required an extraordinary response. However, despite numerous international conferences and national meetings on HIV/AIDS, and many expressions of commitment to urgent action against HIV/AIDS, national and local authorities did not as yet seem convinced.

296. Many leaders in the region recognized the threat that HIV/AIDS posed, but too few were willing to publicly break the silence and denial related to HIV/AIDS issues. There was a prevailing myth that HIV/AIDS was not an Asian problem and that the infection would somehow be confined to groups such as sex workers, injecting drug users and men who had sex with men. Those groups received little sympathy and support from society at large and the prejudices against them often extended to all those affected by HIV/AIDS.

297. The Special Envoy emphasized the need to focus attention on the vulnerability of girls and women who were infected by their male partners. Their exposure to HIV infection was a violation of their human rights, a risk to their lives and health and a risk to their children. While commending ESCAP on according priority to HIV/AIDS issues, she urged it to empower girls and women to protect themselves.

Interactive session

298. The Honorable Mr. Solomoni Naivalu, Minister of Health of Fiji, delivered a statement on behalf of H.E. Mr. Laseina Qarase, Prime Minister of Fiji.

299. He drew the attention of the Round Table to the HIV/AIDS threat to the Pacific, where it was escalating in some island countries. WHO estimated that only 10 per cent of the actual number of people living with HIV/AIDS had thus far been detected in the Pacific island countries and areas. Thus, it was a matter of concern that many individuals were spreading the virus without being aware that they were doing so.

300. Furthermore, he informed the Round Table of initiatives in Fiji, such as a multisectoral advisory committee on AIDS, increased budgetary allocations for HIV/AIDS-related work and a focus on traditional communities for HIV/AIDS prevention. Those initiatives had the support of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet.

301. The Round Table agreed on the importance of prevention in reversing the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Awareness-raising among the general public, condom use, harm reduction among injecting drug users, fighting stigma and discrimination and legal protection for people living with HIV/AIDS were key to the success of HIV prevention. One delegation informed the Round Table of a demonstration zone initiative to promote comprehensive prevention and treatment, as well as the strengthening of its public health system and improvement of its overall health policy. In explaining the role of political commitment and leadership, the President of Botswana stated that HIV/AIDS awareness-raising efforts had begun to take root in his country after he had instructed all ministers to include references to HIV/AIDS in all of their public speeches.

302. Many delegations underscored the need to target children and young people in HIV/AIDS prevention. They pointed out that vulnerable groups, such as sex workers, injecting drug users, migrants and men who had sex with men, merited more support than

was currently the case. At the same time, it was equally important to recognize that girls and housewives were also at risk of HIV infection, as a result of gender inequality. It was a government responsibility to create an enabling environment in which everyone could make informed and responsible choices.

303. Furthermore, many delegations recognized that reducing stigma and providing treatment and legal protection to people living with HIV/AIDS were not just human rights issues but also strategic measures to curb the spread of HIV. Only when people living with HIV/AIDS were not discriminated against and treatment and care were available would more people come forward to be tested for the virus.

304. The Round Table discussed the issue of universal access to voluntary counselling and testing in a confidential setting. While people living with HIV/AIDS had a right to confidentiality, their partners also had the right to know test results and protect themselves. The ethical aspects of whether health-care providers should be given the authority to inform the partners of HIV-infected persons required further discussion.

305. One delegation warned of the potential economic impact of HIV/AIDS, including the loss of economic opportunity, which could amount to billions of US dollars. The social impact of HIV/AIDS could include a 10-fold increase in the number of children orphaned owing to the death of their parents from HIV/AIDS.

306. The Round Table emphasized the importance of comprehensive care services, including the provision of antiretroviral (ARV) drugs. China, India and Thailand were cited as examples of good practice in the production of generic ARV drugs. The Round Table called for more support from developed countries in making drugs more affordable by, and accessible to, people living with HIV and providing more financial resources to countries plagued by the epidemic. The hope was expressed that drugs could be made more readily available at more affordable prices through cost-sharing mechanisms in the foreseeable future. The Round Table expressed satisfaction with the recent progress towards a WTO agreement in favour of the generic production of ARV drugs.

307. With increased access to such drugs, the utilization of voluntary counselling and testing was likely to increase. In Botswana, experienced and trained human resources and laboratory support were found acutely lacking when free ARV drugs were made available within the country. The President of Botswana recommended that the Asian and Pacific countries take note of that issue in their future programme planning.

308. The Round Table paid tribute to Thailand's success in HIV prevention through its 100 per cent condom project, as well as the effective leadership of its prime ministers, which had prevented millions of infections. It had achieved a reduction of new infections from 140,000 to 20,000 cases per year. Thailand had also expanded its programme on the prevention of perinatal HIV transmission, which had protected thousands of babies from HIV infection. One of Thailand's new national priorities was the expansion of a triple regimen ARV programme to cover 50,000 persons living with HIV/AIDS. For its part, Thailand offered to share its knowledge and experience with other countries.

309. The Islamic Republic of Iran presented the results of a successful pilot project carried out in Kermanshah province aimed at establishing appropriate strategies to identify people infected with HIV, provide them with social services, manage the treatment, care and support environment of people living with HIV/AIDS and contain the spread of the pandemic in different communities, such as families, prison populations and society. WHO had acknowledged the project as a best practice and it was planned that it would be extended nationally. The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran offered that best practice to the ESCAP membership for reference and possible adaptation in the countries and areas of the region through the intermediation of the secretariat.

310. The Round Table called for more technical support from the United Nations system in each country, stronger intercountry cooperation, as well as exchange of experiences and good practices, both within the region and between Africa and the Asian and Pacific region. Several delegations urged international organizations and donor agencies to coordinate and streamline their interventions to ensure that all efforts would be under one single national programme, so that resources could be used in the most efficient way. The Chairperson of the United Nations Subregional Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in Bangkok expressed readiness to provide technical and financial support to meet country requests.

Report on the Millennium Development Goals

311. The Executive Secretary welcomed the participants to the second segment of the Ministerial Round Table concerning the first regional report on the Millennium Development Goals, published jointly by ESCAP and UNDP. In moderating that segment of the Round Table, he provided a brief background to the joint ESCAP/UNDP initiative leading to the launching of the report in June 2003. He observed that he had established the Poverty Centre in his Office to undertake the preparation of the study and thanked UNDP for its valuable support and cooperation. A short film was screened, based on the regional report on the Goals and highlighting the progress made in achieving some of the targets.

312. The Assistant Administrator of UNDP expressed his deep gratitude to the Executive Secretary for extending ESCAP's cooperation in preparing the first-ever regional report on the Goals and congratulated the ESCAP team for producing an excellent report. He

pledged UNDP's continued support and cooperation in further strengthening the partnership in supporting the Goals in the region. He observed that the region had achieved extraordinary progress in reducing income poverty but the depth and extent of human poverty remained as daunting as ever. He noted several disappointments in the region's progress towards achieving the Goals. First, the region as a whole had performed poorly in improving agricultural productivity, leading to a high level of hunger and malnutrition. Second, the quality of life of women and children had hardly improved, with high levels of child and maternal mortality prevailing in many parts of the region. Third, very slow progress had been achieved in fostering development partnerships. Both the level and targeting of ODA in Asia and the Pacific had been poor. Much more needed to be done in terms of reducing or removing agricultural subsidies in developed countries.

313. The Round Table congratulated ESCAP and UNDP for preparing an excellent report, which had made a valuable contribution in initiating policy dialogue concerning the Goals and providing a platform for carrying out advocacy work in the region. It noted that although the region had achieved one of the largest decreases in mass poverty in social history, huge challenges existed in the fields of basic education, gender equality, child health, maternal mortality and environmental sustainability. The report had found that between the early and late 1990s, the region as a whole was estimated to have reduced the overall incidence of income poverty from 34 to 24 per cent and was well on its way to meeting the 2015 target. Among other things, rapid economic growth was identified as the primary factor explaining that rapid reduction in income poverty.

314. The Round Table noted that the progress in achieving other non-income poverty targets had been less satisfactory and quite uneven, both across countries and over time. Between the early and late 1990s, the proportion of underweight children had fallen from 35 to 31 per cent, but more than 100 million children under five were moderately or severely malnourished. In view of that trend, a number of countries might miss the 2015 target for nutrition. As many as 113 million children did not attend school, and millions of children were leaving school early. In terms of gender equality, the results were mixed. While several countries had achieved impressive results, many countries continued to face difficulties in ensuring equal participation of men and women at all levels of education. The representation of women in the higher echelons of decision-making was showing very slow progress. Child mortality rates were high in several countries, with many women dying from complications arising from pregnancy. The Round Table noted that the most effective strategy was to reduce poverty since children from poor households were most at risk. It also noted that at the end of 2001, some 7 million people across the region had been living with HIV/AIDS. The situation in some of the most populous countries was quite grave and called for urgent attention. The Round Table observed that most of the targets in achieving environmental sustainability could be missed. More than 1 billion people lacked access to safe drinking water and more than 2 billion lacked proper sanitation. While recognizing that the primary responsibility for achieving the Goals lay with the countries of the region, the Round Table emphasized the need for strengthened development cooperation. In that context, it expressed disappointment at the decreasing trend of ODA and barriers to market access for agricultural products.

315. The Round Table noted with satisfaction that the countries of the region remained firmly committed to achieving the Goals. It also noted with satisfaction that new modalities and policy initiatives had been put in place by several countries of the region to promote human development and achieve the Goals. Nepal had introduced medium-term expenditure plans to improve resource mobilization and utilization so as to reduce poverty. Indonesia had introduced decentralization measures with a view to further reducing the incidence of poverty. Bangladesh had focused on improving governance, investing in human capability and improving social protection schemes. Pakistan had launched small-scale targeted anti-poverty projects with encouraging results. India had identified education as the key to eradicating poverty by putting greater emphasis on increasing national literacy and had also committed itself to raising political consciousness in halting the spread of HIV/AIDS. China had concentrated resources on poverty reduction in remote areas with an emphasis on increased access to education, health and water. Thailand had begun to consider progress in achieving the Goals at a disaggregated level with the initiation of monitoring projects at the provincial level. Myanmar had undertaken a project to generate poverty statistics to better understand the poverty situation in that country.

316. The Round Table noted with satisfaction that an output-oriented approach, in which the East Asian development model contained important lessons, was essential to achieve the Goals in the region. It also noted with satisfaction that an international conference on the Goals would be organized by the Government of China early in 2004 to exchange information and provide mutual support in reaching the targets.

317. In concluding the Round Table, the Executive Secretary thanked all the participants for their valuable contribution and guidance to the secretariat in supporting the Millennium Development Goals in the region.

Chapter III

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE COMMISSION AT ITS FIFTY-NINTH SESSION (PHASE II)

59/1. Regional action in follow-up to the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS [1]

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000, by which the Assembly adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration, in which it resolved, inter alia, to have halted by 2015, and begun to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS,

Recalling also General Assembly resolutions S-26/2 of 27 June 2001, by which the Assembly adopted the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, calling for enhanced initiatives to fight HIV/AIDS at the regional level, and 57/299 of 20 December 2002 on follow-up to the outcome of the twenty-sixth special session: implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS,

Recalling further Commission resolution 57/1 of 25 April 2001 containing a regional call for action to fight HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific,

Taking note of the steps taken by leaders of the Asian and Pacific region since the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly to strengthen regional efforts to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS, including the solidarity demonstrated at the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Meeting on HIV/AIDS, held at Melbourne, Australia, in October 2001,

Recognizing HIV/AIDS as a major development challenge of our times, which could unravel many of the social and economic gains that the Asian and Pacific region has achieved,

Taking note of the need for a sustained multisectoral approach to addressing this development challenge,

Bearing in mind the need for political commitment to secure an expanded and comprehensive response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the ESCAP region, which is home to three of the world's most populous countries, 62 per cent of the world's population and over 600 million young people who are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS,

Noting with particular concern the continuing high rates of infection among young people and the urgent need for increased investment in and implementation of HIV prevention strategies for young people, including improved access to HIV preventive services and the promotion of respectful and responsible sexual behaviour,

1. *Calls upon* all members and associate members:

(a) To implement the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth special session;

(b) To respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic with political commitment at the highest decision-making levels, including by immediate action to develop more comprehensive and strategic national programmes and to strengthen their implementation;

(c) To mainstream HIV/AIDS into national economic and social development planning and increase the availability of human and financial resources to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic at the country level as an emergency development challenge;

(d) To generate adequate resources, both through domestic resource mobilization and by encouraging donors to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance, and encouraging developing countries to ensure that such aid is used effectively to assist in closing the resource gap of an estimated US$ 7 billion required by 2007 for HIV/AIDS in the Asian and Pacific region;

(e) To consider maintaining a high level of investment to prevent the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, even in low-prevalence countries, since in the absence of an early response, low prevalence today could translate into an epidemic in the near future;

(f) To promote policies that prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS through high-risk behaviour, such as casual sex, use of commercial sex services, injecting drug use, reuse of virus-contaminated equipment, and unsafe blood and blood products, reduce its multiplier effects on other communicable diseases, improve access to affordable care and treatment and scale up successful interventions, ensuring that a balance is maintained in the focus on, and allocation of resources for, the prevention of HIV infection, treatment of HIV/AIDS and care for people living with HIV/AIDS;

(g) To promote the implementation of comprehensive interventions for HIV prevention among drug users, together with drug abuse prevention strategies, especially among young people, and encourage members to administer laws in a way that does not inadvertently promote the transmission of HIV;

[1] See paragraphs 78 to 96 above.

(h) To support action to address the gender-specific dimensions of the epidemic, including through efforts for the economic and social empowerment of women, as also greater gender responsiveness and equality to strengthen women's ability to protect themselves from HIV;

(i) To support action to reduce new infections among young people aged 15 to 24;

(j) To facilitate and improve with specific strategies prevention of the mother-to-child-transmission mode of HIV infection;

(k) To improve the accessibility by, and availability for, the poor of antiretroviral and other life-saving drugs as well as diagnostics deemed essential for enabling people living with HIV/AIDS to continue to live meaningful lives;

(l) To strengthen support for children living with HIV/AIDS, orphans of parents who have died of AIDS-related illnesses and older persons affected by the death of adult offspring as a result of HIV/AIDS, so that they do not suffer even more from discrimination and economic hardship;

(m) To encourage the corporate/private sector to play a stronger role in the HIV/AIDS response;

2. *Urges* donor Governments and agencies, regional and international financial institutions, members of the United Nations system and the private sector to join in advocacy for a comprehensive response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic as a major development challenge, including through promoting good practices, building enabling environments and supporting effective interventions in the Asian and Pacific region to prevent the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS;

3. *Urges* the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and its sponsors to intensify efforts to ensure that the targets in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS are fulfilled in the Asian and Pacific region, especially those pertaining to young people aged 15 to 24;

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To intensify, where gaps are identified, advocacy to promote the implementation of the political and resource commitments in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS;

(b) To further strengthen United Nations regional coordination, under the auspices of ESCAP, and together with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, to promote accelerated action and coordinate with other United Nations organizations in addressing issues of stigma and discrimination that are relevant to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment and in ensuring the human dignity of persons living with HIV/AIDS;

(c) To support and cooperate with all subregional groupings, at their request, to strengthen subregional capability to deal with HIV/AIDS as a development challenge;

(d) To mainstream HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support into the programme of work of ESCAP, including intercountry and cross-border cooperation to mitigate the spread of HIV/AIDS among groups whose behaviour, age, gender, mobility and means of livelihood render them especially vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, and through modalities such as life-skills training to enhance the behavioural capability of vulnerable groups to better protect themselves and others from fuelling the spread of HIV, and support for the strengthening of self-help groups of people living with HIV/AIDS;

(e) To initiate measures to build national capacity, upon the request of national Governments, to meet the challenge of HIV/AIDS effectively, including the capacity to deal with issues relating to intellectual property rights, as well as develop national strategic plans for tackling the pandemic, with road maps to achieve targets agreed upon, and the capacity of civil society and non-governmental organizations to participate in national responses;

5. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To provide technical assistance and other means of support for efforts to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in countries and areas of the ESCAP region, particularly the developing and least developed countries;

(b) To report to the Commission at its sixty-first session on regional progress in the implementation of the present resolution.

5th meeting
4 September 2003

59/2. Strengthening social safety in the Asian and Pacific region[2]

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, which referred to the urgent need to address profound social problems, especially poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, that affect every country,

Recalling also the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit, which established a consensus to place people at the core of the concerns for sustainable development,

[2] See paragraphs 247 to 252 above.

Recalling further the pledge by the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session in 2000 to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration to achieve stable, safe and just societies for all,

Acknowledging that while globalization, technological advances and rapid economic growth in some countries of the region have offered unprecedented opportunities and brought about substantial progress on poverty eradication and social integration, they have also presented serious challenges for the people in the region,

Stressing that public policy on social welfare in the region should move beyond crisis management to strengthening the overall social safety system by considering long-term policies, institutional structures and collective efforts by all members and associate members to help the people of the region to manage risks,

Emphasizing the importance of fostering an integrated social safety net, particularly the necessity of establishing a social safety net which provides necessary assistance to the unemployed, the poor and senior citizens as well as other vulnerable groups,

Reaffirming that resources should be mobilized at both the national and regional levels for social safety, to expand opportunities for productive employment and to invest in the development of human resources, entrepreneurship and employability,

1. *Calls upon* members and associate members:

(a) To renew their commitment to implementing the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, held in 1995;

(b) To strengthen efforts to foster social integration and an enabling environment for social development, by promoting productive and gainful employment and eradicating poverty;

2. *Also calls upon* members and associate members, in the context of strengthening social safety:

(a) To emphasize the need to continue to allocate, and enhance the allocation of, resources as appropriate to education, vocational and management training, occupational safety and health, inter alia, by strengthening technical cooperation and collaboration with the private sector in this area;

(b) To stress the need to improve methods for collection and analysis of basic employment data, disaggregated by, inter alia, age, sex and relevant socio-economic categories, as appropriate in the country context, including with regard to the informal, agricultural and service sectors and new forms of employment, and assess the feasibility of developing and improving mechanisms to measure unremunerated work;

(c) To consider devising arrangements, as appropriate, to meet the needs of the poor and vulnerable groups, having regard to available resources;

(d) To strengthen partnerships, as appropriate, among the public sector, the private sector and other stakeholders concerned with social welfare and social safety;

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To design a comprehensive and action-oriented programme of work in this regard in consultation with, and after obtaining the endorsement of, the members and associate members;

(b) To assist members and associate members in the development of social safety policies, including the development of employment data collection and analysis;

(c) To promote experience-sharing and best-practice learning on social integration within the ESCAP region, in coordination and collaboration with other international and regional intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations;

(d) To continue to pay particular attention to disadvantaged, marginalized and unskilled groups in formulating its programme of work in 2004;

4. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission at its sixty-first session on the implementation of the present resolution.

5th meeting
4 September 2003

59/3. Regional implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific during the Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012[3]

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling its resolution 58/4 of 22 May 2002 on promoting an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for people with disabilities in the Asian and Pacific region in the twenty-first century, by which it proclaimed the extension of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, for another decade, 2003-2012,

Recalling also the successful High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Conclude the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, held at Otsu City, Shiga, Japan, from 25 to 28 October 2002 and hosted by the Government of Japan, the Shiga Prefecture Government and the city of Otsu, and its

[3] See paragraphs 255 to 257 above.

adoption of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific,

Observing that the Biwako Millennium Framework identifies the following seven priority areas: self-help organizations of persons with disabilities and related family and parent associations; women with disabilities; early detection, intervention and education; training and employment, including self-employment; access to built environments and public transport; access to information and communications, including information, communication and assistive technologies; and poverty alleviation through capacity-building, social security and sustainable livelihood programmes,

Noting that the international community expressed its commitment to economic and social development in the face of rapid globalization in adopting General Assembly resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000 entitled "United Nations Millennium Declaration", embodying a large number of specific commitments, including gender equity, universal education and poverty eradication, aimed at improving the lot of humanity in the twenty-first century,

Noting the recognition by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank that unless persons with disabilities are brought into the development mainstream it will be extremely difficult to halve poverty by 2015 or give every girl and boy the chance to complete primary education by the same date, which was agreed at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000 and is part of those Banks' commitment to the inclusion of disability concerns in their poverty eradication efforts,

Noting the discussions at the first session of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, established by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/168 of 19 December 2001,

Welcoming the Government of Afghanistan as the forty-second signatory of the Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region, at the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting in October 2002, as well as the Government of New Caledonia as the forty-third signatory of the Proclamation on 3 December 2002,

Noting with appreciation the contributions by Governments and civil society to the technical cooperation trust fund for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002,

1. *Takes note of* the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific;

2. *Requests* all members and associate members to support the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework at the national level through public awareness activities, appropriate policies, other measures and the allocation of resources in keeping with national capacities, and through international cooperation and partnership, including the transfer of resources and technologies, as appropriate;

3. *Urges* Governments in the region which have not done so to sign the Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region;

4. *Invites* all Governments, donor agencies and the private sector to continue to contribute to the technical assistance trust fund for the extended Decade, 2003-2012, to ensure the successful implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework;

5. *Also invites* the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Labour Organization and other concerned United Nations bodies and agencies, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, and civil society organizations, in close cooperation with ESCAP, to strengthen their support for the development of national capabilities for the effective implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework;

6. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To give special attention, in collaboration with all concerned offices, bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, and civil society to the development of regional activities in support of the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework;

(b) To recognize the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability as an ESCAP partner on disability and to ensure close collaboration between ESCAP and the Center on promotion of the empowerment of persons with disabilities and a barrier-free society in the Asian and Pacific region, as a viable means of ensuring the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework;

(c) To support Governments at their request in fulfilling the targets of the Biwako Millennium Framework in such areas as statistics, information and communication technology, urban and rural environments, public transport, poverty reduction, gender and development, and education of children and youth with disabilities;

(d) To provide technical support to Governments in the region in the development of regional support for the consideration of an international convention on the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities by organizing regional meetings and training workshops;

(e) To report to the Commission at its sixty-fourth session on the mid-point review of the present resolution.

5th meeting
4 September 2003

59/4. Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010[4]

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, which are aimed, among other things, at the eradication of poverty,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 55/279 of 12 July 2001, in which the Assembly endorsed the Brussels Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010,

Recognizing the special concerns of the least developed countries as emphasized in the Monterrey Consensus emanating from the International Conference on Financing for Development and the Ministerial Declaration of the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference,

Welcoming the establishment of a trust fund by the Secretary-General to support the activities of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the General Assembly's call, in resolution 57/276 of 20 December 2002, for Member States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the private sector to make voluntary contributions to the trust fund, in particular for the implementation of the Programme of Action at the national, subregional, regional and international levels,

Aware that thirteen of the forty-nine least developed countries, many of which are landlocked developing countries or small island developing States, are in Asia and the Pacific,

1. *Reaffirms* its strong support for the full realization of the seven commitments made at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, as well as the recommendations emanating from the international conferences on the landlocked developing countries and small island developing States;

2. *Also reaffirms* that the least developed countries have the primary responsibility for formulating and implementing effective policies to promote sustainable economic growth and development;

3. *Further reaffirms* its full support for the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in its endeavour to ensure the full mobilization and coordination of all stakeholders for the implementation of the Programme of Action, which forms a basis for regional cooperation to assist the least developed countries;

4. *Stresses* that successful implementation of the Programme of Action depends on shared responsibility and strengthened partnerships, including civil society and the private sector, and invites all members and associate members and subregional, regional and international organizations to support the efforts of the least developed countries in Asia and the Pacific;

5. *Requests* the Executive Secretary, in close coordination with the Office of the High Representative, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Programme and specialized agencies:

(a) To ensure that the programme of work under the themes of poverty reduction, managing globalization and emerging social issues mainstreams the relevant priorities and commitments identified in the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, as called for in General Assembly resolutions 56/227 of 24 December 2001 and 57/276 of 20 December 2002;

(b) To review, analyse and disseminate information on economic and social developments in the least developed countries annually in line with the Programme of Action;

(c) To assist the least developed countries, where appropriate, in the formulation of appropriate sectoral development strategies and policies, paying due regard to the diverse development circumstances and constraints facing the least developed countries, in accordance with the Programme of Action;

(d) To conduct a regional mid-term review of the implementation of the Programme of Action in 2005 to consider the developments affecting the countries concerned subsequent to the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries;

6. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission at its sixty-first session on the implementation of the present resolution.

5th meeting
4 September 2003

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[4] See paragraphs 258 to 264 above.

Annex I

STATEMENT OF PROGRAMME BUDGET IMPLICATIONS OF ACTIONS AND PROPOSALS OF THE COMMISSION

1. The resolutions adopted by the Commission at its fifty-ninth session will have no additional cost implications for the regular budget of the United Nations.

2. Extrabudgetary resources will be sought for the implementation of activities required under the resolutions adopted at the fifty-ninth session of the Commission.

Annex II

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED TO THE COMMISSION DURING THE SECOND PHASE (LISTED BY AGENDA ITEM)

Agenda item	*Title*	*Symbol*
1 (c)	Provisional agenda	E/ESCAP/L.153
	Annotated provisional agenda	E/ESCAP/L.154
2 (a)	Report on the current economic situation in the region and related policy issues	E/ESCAP/1266/Rev.1 and Corr.1
2 (b)	Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region	E/ESCAP/1267
3 (a)	Implementation of Commission resolution 58/1 on restructuring the conference structure of the Commission	E/ESCAP/1283 and Corr.1
3 (b)	Report of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission	E/ESCAP/1288 and Add.1 and 2
3 (c)	Outcome of the evaluation of regional institutions (APCTT, SIAP and CGPRT Centre)	E/ESCAP/1299
	Outcome of the evaluation of the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre	E/ESCAP/1300
	Report on the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology	E/ESCAP/1278
	Report on the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific	E/ESCAP/1270
	Report of the Regional Coordination Centre for Research and Development of Coarse Grains, Pulses, Roots and Tuber Crops in the Humid Tropics of Asia and the Pacific	E/ESCAP/1272
4	Theme topic for the sixtieth session of the Commission	E/ESCAP/1301
5 (a)	Poverty reduction: developments, issues and strategies	E/ESCAP/1268/Rev.1
	Report of the Committee on Statistics on its thirteenth session	E/ESCAP/1269
5 (b)	Regional developments and issues	E/ESCAP/1273
	Progress in the implementation of resolutions relating to the theme of managing globalization	E/ESCAP/1297
	Report of the Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development on its fourth session	E/ESCAP/1274
	Report of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development on its fourth session	E/ESCAP/1275
	Report on the regional follow-up to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development	E/ESCAP/1302

Agenda item	*Title*	*Symbol*
	Report of the Steering Group of the Committee on Regional Economic Cooperation on its fourteenth meeting	E/ESCAP/1276
	Report on the Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery	E/ESCAP/1277/Rev.1
5 (c)	Emerging social issues: trends and approaches: the rights-based approach to social development	E/ESCAP/1279
	Report of the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference	E/ESCAP/1271 and Corr.1
	Shanghai Implementation Strategy: Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 and the Macao Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific 1999	E/ESCAP/1280
	Report of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Conclude the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002	E/ESCAP/1281
6	Report of the Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries on its sixth session	E/ESCAP/1303 and Corr.1
7	Report of the Asian and Pacific Development Centre	E/ESCAP/1290
	Report of the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia	E/ESCAP/1291/Rev.1
	Report of the Mekong River Commission	E/ESCAP/1292
	Report of the Typhoon Committee	E/ESCAP/1293
	Report of the Panel on Tropical Cyclones	E/ESCAP/1294

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